

INSIDE SOCCER

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YOUR QUALITY WEEKLY DEVOTED TO OZ SOCCER...

NSL PREVIEW

TEN DAYS TO GO AND WE TAKE THE FIRST OF A TWO-PART NATIONAL LOOK AT THE SQUADS LEADING UP TO THE OCTOBER 1 KICK-OFF.



LIFE'S GREAT FOR SOCCER AUSTRALIA

By Aidan Ormond

This morning at Sydney's Star City Casino Soccer Australia will reveal one of the biggest sponsorship announcements for our national teams. The sponsors are believed to be LG Electronics (LGE), a worldwide enterprise specialising in Displays, Home Appliances, and Multimedia.

It is believed that this deal - widely tipped in the media over the week-end - will range from the Joeys up to the Socceroos, as well as assisting the various state federations.

LG Electronics has a track record in Soccer sponsorship, having been heavily involved in the France 98 World Cup.

Spanning the globe through operations in 27 countries and distribution throughout 150 nations, the Korean company is now forging its image as a leading global enterprise.

Their new product strategy is centred around its digital technology and features next-generation display devices as its core product group.

Football, not surprisingly, was the perfect vehicle for 'LG', whose slogan is 'Life's Good'.

Soccer Australia's national team agency agreement with IMG has seemingly finally delivered on its goal of providing much-needed revenue for our national program.

It is believed that there will be more announcements regarding national team sponsorships in the coming weeks.

Soccer Australia is also expected to announce an agency agreement with the Rivkin organisation for the NSL. A naming rights sponsor is expected soon, but probably not in time for the start of the NSL on Friday night October 1.

The Rivkin agreement is expected to provide upfront monies to Soccer Australia for the NSL marketing rights, some of which may also be going to the state federations.

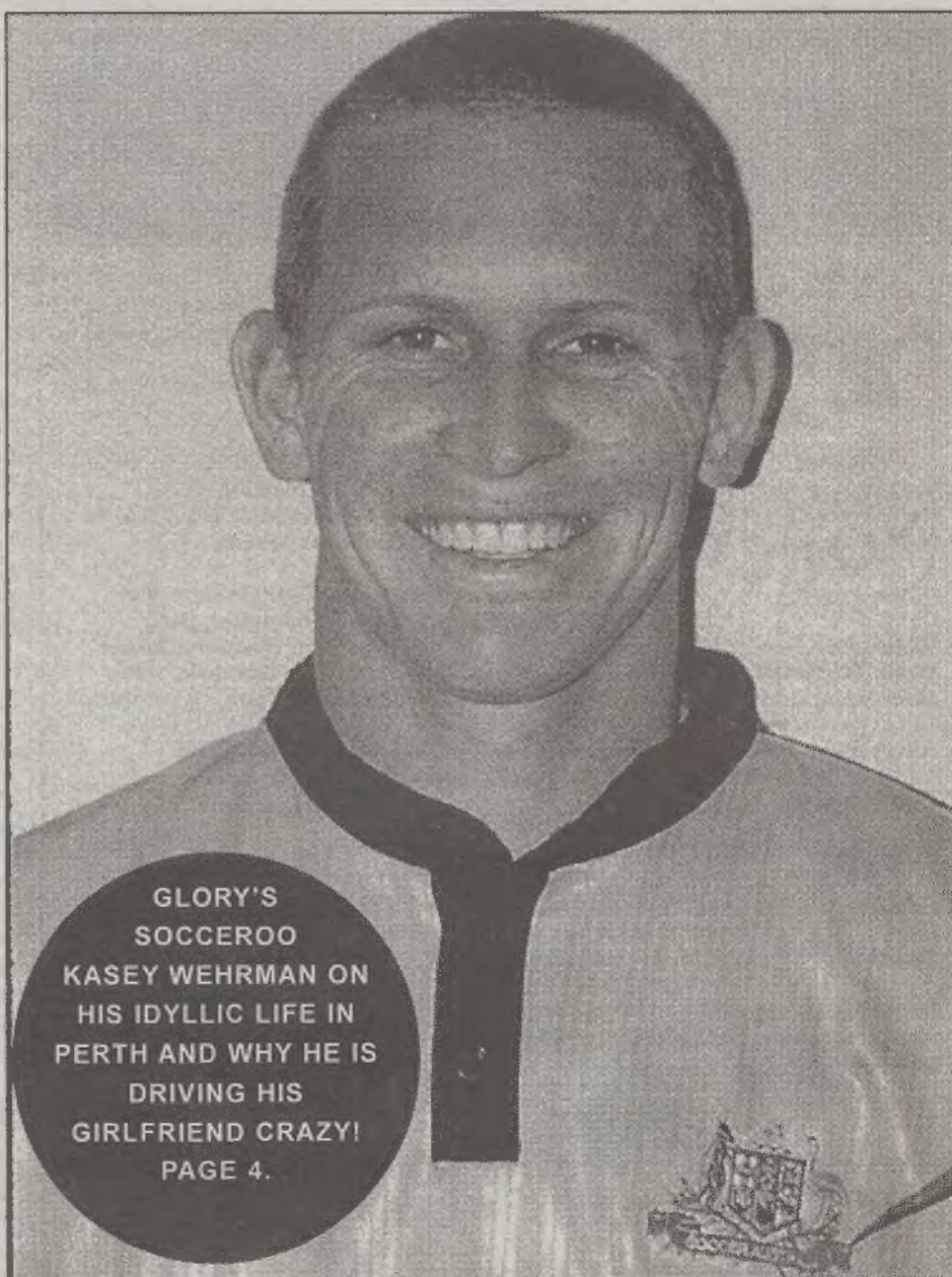
The LGE news comes on the back of reports that Soccer Australia's financial position is considerably stronger than it was 12 months ago, when current Chairman Basil Scarsella was thrust into the top job after the resignation of David Hill.

At the time Scarsella's plan was to bring the national governing body back into fiscal health, and this appears to have been achieved, together with a more nationally unified game under his less confrontational approach.

Meanwhile on the other side of town today, Parramatta Power is also expected to announce exciting sponsorship deals for their debut season, as well as reveal their new playing kit for the season.

With just ten days to go before the kick-off to the NSL - the Adelaide Sharks/Stars fiasco notwithstanding - it appears our national league, and national program, are back on track.

National coach Frank Farina is due to leave for Europe this Friday, with Graham Arnold, to meet with our Euro-based stars to let them know Soccer Australia's plans for the 2002 World Cup campaign.



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GREG BLAKE'S COLUMN

FOOTBALL KINGZ WITH STERGIBOY

OVERSEAS AUSSIES

GOUTZOULIS SAVES SOUTH IN OPENER



South coach Ange Postecoglou has often spoken about the importance of his squad players. George Goutzoulis, one of those fringe players, showed his worth by saving South with two late goals, thus averting a potential disaster in the first game of the Oceania qualifiers for WCC 2000 in Fiji.

Playing against Malaita Eagles in Lautoka, South struggled all day against the Solomon Island side on a pitch reportedly as sandy as a beach in 36 degree conditions.

The upset was on the cards when the Island side went ahead five minutes after the break.

South, stung by this, hit the post courtesy of Paul Trimboli. With time running out coach Ange Postecoglou brought Goutzoulis (pictured) on to provide inspiration. This he did.

Goutzoulis provided the leveller after 80 minutes and then snatched victory five minutes

from time.

"They weren't a great side but the conditions were a real leveller," Postecoglou told AAP from Fiji.

"The pitch was rock hard, sandy, had no grass and it was bumpy we are just glad to get a win under our belts in our first match," he said.

It was a scary day all round, with South's number one fan Jeff Kennett also getting the fright of his life on Saturday.

Tomorrow (Wed) South plays Samoan champion Konica in its next group match in Lautoka.

Ryde City Gunners are OUT of the NSW Super League, and Manly Warringah, St George and Penrith Panthers are IN for the next Super League season kicking off in January. This makes it a 14-team competition.

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INSIDE SOCCER'S AUSTRALIAN NEWS AND GOSS

GLORY SIGNS BRAZILIAN

Edgar Junior, 25, a defensive midfielder, has signed for Glory from Paysandu in Brazil. Glory beat WA U/23 3-1 last weekend. Edgar Junior impressed with his skills, as did Ivan Ergic. Scorers were Valle, Ergic and Boutsianis, whose free-kick special had the fans singing Offspring style, 'Give it to me Boutsie Ah-ha Ah-ha! Glory is also interested in another Brazilian, Jiwago, who plays for Botafogo. Glory plays Force in two games this week against Force: on Sat in Bussleton and Litis Stadium on Monday. And Vinko Buljbasic's rehab is going well according to the club.

EDDIE YOU CHARMER

Marconi Stallions coach, Eddie Krncevic, charmed the Years 7-12 players in the soccer teams of St Andrew's Cathedral School in the city during the week. Even though Wallaby coach, Rod McQueen is a former old boy, St Andrew's soccer teams outnumber rugby teams, with 13 and 7 teams respectively from Years 7-12 - surely a good sign for the code when its making incursions into independent schools by this magnitude. Ed had a short Q&A session with the crowd of 150 students and parents at the soccer dinner, and then met one-on-one with some of the senior players - making many new fans for the Stallions in the process. And good luck to Marconi's Mark Babic, who will soon complete his University degree in Rehab Counselling. We wish you all the best.

FARINA'S BUSY SCHEDULE

Year to Go' Olympic Club fund-raiser celebration at Darling Harbour, VSF Gold Medal Dinner in Melbourne, Queensland Olympic Football Committee fund-raiser in Brisbane, South Australian Soccer Federation Gold Medal Dinner in Adelaide. Just some of the gigs new national coach Frank Farina has been doing, all in the name of PR. He is still due, at this stage, to fly out with Arnie on Friday to meet with the OS-based players.

LAURIE SCHWAB MEMORIAL MATCH

Don't forget the Laurie Schwab Memorial Match is on this Friday Sep 24 at Knights Stadium. It will feature Melbourne Knights v Gippsland Falcons and there is a curtain raiser between the Knights Legends and South Legends kicking off at 6pm. Laurie was one of the game's gentlemen, so try to get down for a good cause. And still in Melbourne, congratulations to the Vic Youth team for winning the recent Women's National Youth Championships in Darwin. Jennifer Black (any relation to Sharon Black?) scored the winner in the final against Qld. Onya girls.

BREAKERS V STALLIONS

That's happening today (Tuesday) at 4.30 at the Marconi Stadium. And Northern Spirit has their own Champions Club, which offers fans the opportunity to see games in the comfort of the top deck of the Mollie Dive stand, with all the facilities and added on benefits you would expect. Ideal for the corporate sector. Call 9640 2187 for more details.

NSW AWARDS

Congratulations goes to Ian Tresidder of Edgeworth Eagles for winning the NBN Player of the Year in the NSW league awards. Coaches' Coach of the Year went to Neil Owens of Ad Rosebuds.

SOCCEROOS AT 64

Australia has dropped a further three places down the latest FIFA world rankings list for September, coming in at

64 from a high in the mid-30s during the Terry Venables reign. New Zealand has risen three places to 101 on the back of its display at the Confederations Cup in Mexico.

CARLTON PROMOTIONS

Carlton family day is 26 Sep at Anderson Park, Anderson Creek Rd Doncaster 10am-6pm. And don't forget Crazy John's Soccer Superclinic on Thursday 30 September (11am to 1pm) at Olympic Park. It features all the Victorian clubs: Triple M rock patrols will broadcast live from the event and there is no need to register. All participants receive 10% off all Sony Playstations at sponsors' outlets. And the young guns at Carlton who thought Andrew Marth was too old were recently put in their place: Stabber thrashed them at sprints, won the bet and shut the cheeky monkeys up! And check this quote out from the glossy Carlton prospectus: '... soccer will run right over us. It is the biggest threat to footy's continued hold over the nation's sporting masses.' This was said by Wayne Jackson, AFL Chief Executive just two months ago in Adelaide. Smart bloke.

HOLD THE LINE PLEASE!

Surely the best on hold music and info in the NSL is Perth Glory's. It professionally sells just about anything and everything, plus it features the song 'Glory Glory Perth Glory', a sort of barber shop version that sounds like Monty Python's 'I am a Lumberjack and I am okay'. It's brilliant. South Melbourne is not too far behind with its on-hold music and info, but the worst is Sydney Olympic. It sounds like popcorn being made over the phone. Bizarre stuff.

WATER, WATER

As soon as they arrived, South Melbourne knew they were in the tropics. The water that they took with them was used up so fast that after just 24 hours, an urgent phone call (by coach Postecoglou) saw the club scramble to send out another shipment of H2O in time for their first game. Still in Victoria and tonight (Tues) there is an extraordinary meeting to endorse the new board an new constitution of Gippy Falcons.

NEW MATILDA COACH

Chris Tanzey has been confirmed as the new national women's coach. Tanzey is a former youth at Liverpool and is hopeful of a medal at Sydney 2000. "We should enjoy the journey not just the destination" said the philosophical coach who has taken over from Greg Brown.

FIX THE SURFACE

The surface at the 'G' (MCG) has been voted by AFL players as the worst ground in the league. Last weekend, green spray was applied to cover the bareness of the surface (the Man Utd tour?). Let's hope the Brazil game gets the pitch it deserves in November. Next year the surface will be relaid between Sep 3 and 6.

GOOD OMEN FOR COSMOS?

Yes we know it is hard to believe but Cosmos is No 1 on the charts! The latest issue of 'bma' (bands, music, action) shows that for the fortnight August 26 to September 9, the Cosmos CD was the top seller on the Local Artist Chart! They charted higher than the band Way Hip Antelopes! (You've never heard of WHA??) And you, dear reader, can win this CD, details in this issue. New Cosmos signing Robbie Hooker is the club's new captain by the way.

THE SEAL OF A CLASS FINISHER

ROGER SLEEMAN

Where did the dream begin, and when did you know you had the talent to make it?

DAVID SEAL

Would you believe at the age of five, I was aware that a future in European football was available for me if I could make the grade. When I was playing U/10 for Penrith R.S.L., I scored 262 goals in one season so at that moment there was no thought of any career other than football.

R.S.

Were you aware at the time of your goalscoring feats in the N.S.L. that you were being compared to the likes of Baartz, Soper and Kosmina in terms of crowd appeal?

D.S.

I suppose everyone loves a goalscorer and I did receive many accolades at the time. It's always an honour to be compared to legends like these players but in the end you have to make a name for yourself and for me it was all about scoring as many times as possible to make this happen.

R.S.

After scoring those 38 goals in your first two seasons in the NSL, how could Eddie Thomson ignore you for national team duty?

D.S.

That's a question I've asked myself many times during my career. I believed in those early days that at least a squad place would have been a start. While I

A familiar saying in football circles is: 'Goalscorers are born, not made'. This statement particularly applies to Australian football where our failure to qualify for the World Cup finals since 1974 could arguably be attributed to our lack of scoring ability. Yet at a mere seventeen years of age, David Seal was the top scorer in the NSL with seventeen goals. He repeated the dose the following year during the 1990/91 season with twenty-one. Remarkably, Seal has not appeared for Australia at full senior level despite scoring regularly in Europe and England since then. In this exclusive interview, Northern Spirit's newly-signed striker reveals his disappointments and future plans to Inside Soccer's Roger Sleeman



David Seal, and young fan, at North Sydney. 'I want to make an important contribution to the side's progress,' says Seal.

ventured overseas till their mid-twenties.

However, in hindsight I must admit that I should've gone. It would've allowed me to establish myself in Europe at a young age and created greater options in the future.

R.S.

During the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, Eddie Thomson seemed reluctant to utilize your services. Can you explain the circumstances behind your non-selection?

D.S.

I did play one full match in the 3-0 victory against Denmark and Thomson did congratulate me on my performance that day but that was my last appearance in the tournament. Perhaps our 6-1 defeat against Poland in the semi final vindicated that I deserved more opportunities.

R.S.

When you finally made the move to Europe in 1993, why did you go to Aalst in the Belgium second division?

D.S.

You might say they made an offer I couldn't refuse but apart from the financial inducement, Aalst was a club which was expected to gain promotion to the First Division in the following season, so I realized there was potential for me to go places.

Also, Eddie Krnecic was at the club and we formed a great striking partnership, which led the club to promotion in the 1994/5 season. I was more than satisfied with my 23-goal haul in that 1993/94 season.

R.S.

Why did you choose to move to Bristol City in the English First Division in the 1995/1996 season. What was it like in your first season at the club?

D.S.

City had scouts looking at me in several games playing for Aalst and fortunately I scored a few times which led to interest being shown by Russell Osman, the former Ipswich Town great, and manager of Bristol City at the time. I signed a lucrative contract with the club, which was helped by a free transfer from Aalst.

R.S.

Why was Bristol City relegated?

D.S.

Basically, Osman wasn't given money to buy some extra quality players and despite his successor Joe Jordan being given an open cheque book, it was not enough to save the club from relegation.

R.S.

How did you rate Joe Jordan as a manager?

D.S.

You certainly couldn't doubt the man's credentials because everybody knows Jordan was one of the toughest strikers Scotland ever produced. However, his tactics were rather direct and based on playing high balls into the box and competing physically with defenders

wherever possible. He particularly demonstrated this philosophy in five-a-side training matches where he loved to relive old memories on the pitch.

Even so I had a good season during 1996/97 in division two, scoring 15 goals in 28 matches, and sharing a partnership with Paul Agostino which reaped 32 goals.

R.S.

Why did you leave Bristol City to go to Northampton Town in 1997/8 season and how did you perform at the club?

D.S.

"That's a question I've asked myself many times..."

David Seal on why he has not made a single appearance for the Socceroos

Things weren't exactly to my liking at Bristol and when the chance came to move to Northampton I grabbed it and fortunately scored regularly at Sixfields (their home ground).

R.S.

Most people back in Australia rated you as a Premier League player. Why hasn't it happened?

D.S.

While playing under Joe Jordan, Southampton made me an offer which the club refused. Other clubs including Watford also made offers to Northampton Town but the club was asking too much for the transfer and so people like Graham Taylor lost interest.

Who knows I could've been playing

with Richard Johnson at Vicarage Road in the Premiership this season if things had worked out?

R.S.

Why have you come back to Australia?

D.S.

As you well know Northampton Town didn't have a great season in 1998/99 and I received a call from Graham Arnold to sign for Northern Spirit for a season. I haven't been home for a while and I jumped at the chance to play here and try and help Spirit to the championship and at the same time score enough goals to make Frank Farina aware of my presence for the national team.

After all I'm only 27 and I believe I can score goals at international level if given the chance.

R.S.

What are your impressions of Northern Spirit?

D.S.

Their record speaks for itself on and off the field. The club is a highly professional outfit and the crowds they drew last season were a first in Sydney football.

This season we have a highly talented squad with a blend of experience and youth.

I'm particularly impressed with Matthew Langdon and Antonio Faria and if the club can continue to unveil talent like this its future is assured.

I want to make an important contribution to the club's progress this season before I return to play in Europe next season.



David Seal: The 27-year-old is back for only one year before he plans to resume his Euro career.

was playing in Belgium and England in the past six years, I was scoring more goals than the established strikers Farina, Arnold and Aurelio Vidmar yet I never received a call up from either Thomson or Terry Venables.

Lack of performance was certainly not the reason so you should ask the question of Thomson and Venables and please report back to me.

Perhaps Eddie Thomson thought I was too young at seventeen to be selected but that didn't prevent Glenn Hoddie playing Michael Owen in the England team at eighteen. However, I doubt if either Thomson or Venables followed my career in Europe very closely.

R.S.

Your five-goal tally in the 1991 W.Y.C. was obviously a major factor in Australia reaching the semi final against Portugal? Why didn't you take the plunge and go overseas after that tournament, and do you regret not doing so?

D.S.

F.C. Bruges, Anderlecht and Standard Liege approached me but being only nineteen at the time I wasn't really ready to leave Australia and my family. After all Arnold, Farina and Slater hadn't

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TENDON SIDELINES TOEY WEHRMAN

By Aidan Ormond

Spare a thought for Kasey Wehrman. After a well-publicized transfer from Brisbane Strikers a couple of months ago the Socceroo has not even trained or played with his new club Perth Glory during the off-season. A tendon injury has seen to that.

The frustration of sitting around watching Bernd Stange's squad, coupled with adapting to a new environment thousands of kilometres from his comfort zone in Brisbane, has seen the kid from country Queensland climbing the walls.

"I am driving my girlfriend crazy," said Wehrman on the phone last week with the shouts of players training in the background. "She was glad to get a job and get out of the house! I mean how many movies can you watch together! If I'm not training and playing with the players, how can I get to know them properly?" he asked.

Not that things are all that bad for the attacking midfielder tipped to be part of Frank Farina's quest for a place at World Cup 2002. He is playing for a club that he describes as "very very professional", is on a reputed \$150,000 per year and he has a house on the beach. As he says, "I've still got it good."

And according to Wehrman, the Glory squad is strong enough to once again challenge for honours. "The side looks good.

Although there are a few injury worries to Halpin and Miller, I think top six is a definite possibility."

The club itself is also impressing their new recruit. "I think when you have more money you can be more professional. And they have such a big following here, it's incredible. There were 300-400 kids at a promotion the other day, and it wasn't even advertised, just word of mouth.

"Even when we train or have pool sessions," he said of the media attention, "there are at least ten cameras watching you. The players are always in demand with the TV and radio. In Brisbane the public really didn't know us because the club did not have the money to promote us properly."

Prior to his current injury the Socceroos dominated his off-season. His starring role in our national team's two games against Manchester Utd confirmed what many thought: the kid from Kloncurry is good. "It's always good to measure yourself against the best," he said of the Red Devils. "And I've said it before, with the side we had for the FIFA All-Stars game, we would have beaten them by a couple of goals."

At this point the next Socceroos games will be on home soil against Brazil in Sydney and Melbourne in November. Wehrman has been tipped as a starter, but he is wary of his form. "Brazil would be great ... if I'm picked. But if my form is not good enough and someone else is performing, well, who



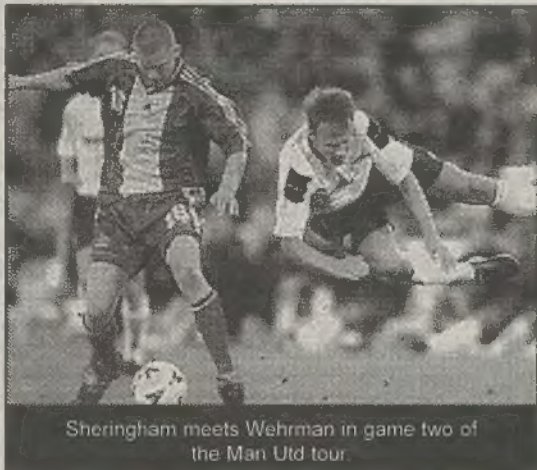
Wehrman and Viduka in the Olyroo v Socceroo friendly in June.

knows?"

Off-field happiness is very important to the Queenslander. "When there are things outside of soccer that can take your mind off the game, and you're happy with your life then I think that is very important to your success."

Speaking of which, Wehrman came to Perth Glory purely for his career. He, like many of our outrageously talented younger players, seeks a life overseas at a professional club. Glory provides him with the closest possible version of that here in Australia; a perfect preparation for the life that beckons.

"Because the way the Strikers were going I had to leave. What people don't understand is that this is my career," he said adamantly. "I love Brisbane and I grew up playing with those guys at the Strikers for four-five years, but I needed to push myself and find new challenges to improve as a player. I want to play overseas, there is the Olympics as well, and here at Glory it is ideal



Sheringham meets Wehrman in game two of the Man Utd tour.

preparation."

Freedom of expression is clearly something he relishes with his coaches. "Raul (Blanco) gives us in the Olyroos the confidence to express ourselves. The Olympics is a big goal of mine, and if Raul keeps that attitude we can go a long way.

"And Bernd Stange is a professional. He can read a player well and he is a very pleasant and kind man. You can call him anytime if you need to talk."

Like anyone who wants to achieve success, a certain amount of reinvention is needed. And Wehrman is no different. "We were in party mode too much in Brisbane. I've come here to get the best out of myself," he added.

So despite missing his friends and family in Queensland — and driving his girlfriend mad — he is focused on achieving the best he can be. And Wehrman can be one of the best we have ever produced, and he can't wait to show the Perth public his style.

GREG BLAKE



C7 SOCCER
COMMENTATOR



Is it possible to look to the governing body of this sport for some strong leadership, at least in matters of grave importance?

Call me old-fashioned, but the survival or otherwise of NSL clubs falls into that category and to watch the on-again, off-again saga of the Adelaide Sharks/Southern Stars very publicly unfold is yet another humiliating knife in the back of the game.

I find it very difficult to imagine the AFL allowing such a public pants-down as this one with weeks to go before the start of the championship campaign.

The strong-willed Hill administration copped some flak for dumping Parramatta Eagles, Melbourne Zebras and Heidelberg some five years ago but hindsight says the decision was spot on, with Perth Glory filling the void and paving the way for a powerful new generation of NSL clubs.

Soccer Australia's reactive attitude to these sorts of crisis situations is pathetic and the future of the Sharks/Stars should have been addressed months ago.

SA should have done its homework on this one as the Sharks have been on shaky ground — and they're not Robinson Crusoe either — for some considerable time.

If two South Australian clubs is still a viable option the league should bite the bullet and be prepared to back its judgement by propping up the Sharks for as long as it takes.

If not, kiss 'em bye-bye.

Why is that tail always seems to be wagging the dog?

In an impassioned speech to a press gallery, which included representatives of Melbourne's two major dailies, George Vasilopoulos made some valid points about the apparent lack of interest in his club's bid for the inaugural World Club Championship.

"I think what you've witnessed here today is a very professional set-up," said South Melbourne's president Vasilopoulos at his club's pre-season launch at Crown Casino recently.

"I believe an AFL club would be very proud and maybe some of them wouldn't even come up to this, so all that is lacking is people's interest," he said, aiming an obvious barb at mainstream media. "I know we're in the middle of an election and the AFL finals series but here is a team that won back-to-back championships and is going to Fiji on a fully FIFA-organized tournament, which no other club has done in Australia.

"That's my disappointment, that people have not picked up on this.

"People in Europe have, because they all of a sudden want to know who South Melbourne is — this team which all of a sudden will be pitted against Manchester United.

"I'm sure when we come back on September 27 the interest will be there, if not from the mainstream media then from the overseas media.

"I hope we can create interest in this club all over the world." Nice try, but the result was still no more than a mere handful of paragraphs well buried inside the following day's newspapers.

More on South Melbourne's WCC bid, the club is expecting a financial windfall should it edge past the preliminary rounds currently being held in Fiji.

The champions have jagged some shiny new pennies in the wake of dual title success and Vasilopoulos is confident that WCC success will produce more jackpots.

"You see already two new major sponsors being announced — all that is part of lifting the profile of the sport," he said last week.

"We're not talking about five or ten thousand dollars here, we're talking \$80,000 and

\$100,000 sponsorship, on top of four or five other major sponsorships, on top of a major sponsor which has increased their involvement to a million dollars over four years.

"We've also been talking to a number of potential new sponsors and they are all waiting to see what happens in Fiji.

"If we are successful in Fiji — and we are going to be — the interest that will be generated for this club I think will go into millions of dollars."

Ominously, the strong appear to be getting stronger.

Stuart Munro might have moved onto Carlton but the former Gippsland Falcons boss has some encouraging words for the club tipped as the most likely to fold in the foreseeable future.

"Personally I think there is a place for places like Gippsland," Munro said recently.

"Look at any league in the world, and it doesn't matter which league it is, clubs aren't taking themselves out of the league because they can't compete.

"If they weren't there you might only have eight or nine teams and that's not enough.

"There is a place like Gippsland, the only worry is that they get themselves into a difficult financial situation again.

"This year already the players they've managed to get in and the wages that they are paying are a big improvement on last year, and I'm delighted to see that.

"I just hope the people of Gippsland go out and give them their support because I think that the people of Gippsland won't know what they have lost until it is gone.

"I think they can be a real tough outfit this year.

"We drew the last five games of last season and the only problem was that we couldn't score goals.

"If they can get that one find, a player who can score goals, they could cause some real problems."

"Just for the record, Gippsland's first-up home game against Perth is poised to go down in the record books.

If the match is drawn the Falcons' record of six consecutive drawn games will equal the all-time record in the league for successive draws currently held by Brisbane Lions (in 1980) and St George (1990/91).

Ange Postecoglou's coaching career was on a wafer thin ice when South Melbourne stumbled its way through the opening half dozen games of his first full season, in 1996/97.

Three years later he still has nightmares about what might have been and they are enough to spur him on despite the club's subsequent success.

"I've been coaching for three years and we've won two championships and now we're doing this thing (World Club Championship) and I got interviewed for the national team coaching job," he reflects.

"Mate, it has been an amazing journey, to say the least.

"I still remember those days vividly and I had a chat to the boys just the other day and they were saying 'well Ange, what's our motivation?' I could only tell them what drives me, and what it is, is a fear of failure. "I clearly remember those first five games and I've been at this club long enough to know that when the times are lean it is not a pleasant place to be.

"That's what drives me and that is constantly on my mind.

"As great as the two championships have been, that fear of having five thousand people screaming at me on match day — well let's just say it's not a pleasant experience.

"That just motivates me a hell of a lot."

10 DAYS TO GO ...

WELCOME TO PART ONE OF INSIDE SOCCER'S PREVIEW OF NSL 99/2000. NEW SPONSORS, CLUBS AND MARKETING ARE ON OFFER IN THIS, THE FINAL NSL OF THIS CENTURY. SO LET'S BEGIN WITH GREG BLAKE'S LOOK AT THE BACK-TO-BACK CHAMPIONS FROM LAKE-SIDE: SOUTH MELBOURNE.



WHO
WILL
HAVE
THEIR
HANDS
ON
THE
FIRST
NSL
TROPHY
OF
THE
NEW
CENTURY?

south

CAN THEY MAKE IT THREE IN A ROW?

South Melbourne will not win the 1999/2000 NSL title. Don't ever underestimate this club's grand achievements in the past two years – or over the past decade for that matter – but the likelihood of them equalling Sydney City's mark of three consecutive championships (1980 through to 1982) is remote. History is already heavily weighted against South's 'three-peat' dream, with Marconi (champions in 1988 and 1989) and Melbourne Knights (1994 and 1995) having come to grief well short of immortality.

South's unhealthy preoccupation of the World Club Championship – and that possible dream match up with Manchester United – combined with the prospect of the bar being raised considerably higher again by high-rollers like Perth and Northern Spirit, and the prognosis for South Melbourne does not appear a healthy one.

But perhaps the best analysis of South's prospects comes from a former NSL star, still quite close to the South Melbourne camp, who believes the lack of aggressive recruiting will be the club's achilles heel.

"South Melbourne won the championship in 1997/98 but I don't think they knew why they did," the former international told me.

"It's no reflection on (coach) Ange Postecoglou, but the club itself still doesn't recognise that the seeds of this team were sown in the two years before that.

"They missed the finals in 95/96 and didn't look too good early in Ange's first full season and the administration panicked and went out to actively recruit the players they wanted.

"I think they will struggle this season because since they've started winning the club has not been proactive in this area at all."

On paper it's a point well made, with championship players Steve Iosifidis,

Fausto de Amicis, Nick Orlic, Con Blatsis, Dave Clarkson, Michael Curcija, John Anastasiadis, Goran Lozanovski, Tansel Baser and Bill Damianos all having been lured to or cemented their places with South between 1995 and 1997 – most of them under Postecoglou.

Last year the club debuted just four new players – three of them just kids – and not one managed ten or more senior starts, although former Shark Jim Tsekis came off the bench 17 times. This season Anthony Magnacca comes in from Canberra Cosmos and Ritchie Alagich has been lured south from the Sharks.

With respect to both boys, the return from recruiting has again been meagre, at least by 1995 to 1997 standards.

However, Postecoglou dismisses the suggestions that the club has not been as aggressively active as it might on this front, preferring to call the club's policy one of "selective recruiting.

"The team I took over, well we had to recruit aggressively," Postecoglou explained just prior to flying out to Fiji for the World Club Championship preliminaries.

"We didn't finish fourth last (season 1995/96) by accident; that was a pretty ordinary team I took over.

"We potentially had some pretty good players and a couple of outstanding ones, but we needed to recruit aggressively if we were to achieve what we wanted to achieve, and we did just that.

"I am a pretty keen student of successful teams around the world and I am a

great believer that there has to be some consistency and cohesion there from year to year.

"Once I had that nucleus and I was happy with that I was never ever going to have more than one or two more players, as required, on a yearly basis.

"If things work accordingly it's fine, but had we not had success then obviously

you'd have to revamp things.

"Jimmy Tsekis came in last year and did his bit and pieces and the year before we bought in Con Boutsianis, John Anastasiadis and Goran Lozanovski.

"Again, only three players but they all played a significant part and that's what I'm looking for from our new signings this season. **CONTINUED NEXT PAGE**

MELBOURNE

FARINA



Available at good
bookstores.

Young Socceroos.
1988 Seoul Olympics.
Three World Cup campaigns.
Four championships.
Two Cup wins.
Canberra, Marconi, Sydney City, Brisbane
Belgium, France, Italy.
363 games. 167 goals.
And now, Socceroo coach.
Read all about it.

MY WORLD IS ROUND

Frank Farina's personal playing history



New signing Richie Alagich

Continued from page five
"I think Richie Alagich and Anthony Magnacca will surprise a few people with their contributions.

"I don't think there has been a need for major overhauls and I'm certainly very careful about what players to bring in to the club.

"You don't need new faces just for the sake of it."

With the loss of Michael Petkovic, Hungarian goalkeeping import Milan Udvarasch is almost assured of a starting berth.

Not so Alagich or Magnacca, the two newcomers, who are likely to join the likes of Vaughan Coveny, Tsekenis and

Anastasiadis, each of whom has done significant time on the bench in the past two years.

"I realize that I'm not going to get a first eleven straight away — he (Postecoglou) has got players here who've won two championships for him," declared Alagich.

"That's the challenge for me, to prove myself here."

The contrast for Magnacca is stark, having come from perennial wooden-spooner Canberra to the home of the champions.

"I have noticed a lot of difference, for sure," he said.

"Now that I'm at South it's only going to improve my game and I've noticed a change already in the last month or two.

"You're surrounded by a lot of better players and you can't help but improve really.

"I consider myself very lucky to have come down to South Melbourne and I'm just happy to be there.

"I know it's going to be hard (to nail down a spot in the team) but hopefully that will bring out the best in me."

Five-club NSL veteran David Clarkson believes that the senior players will lack none of the hunger, which has already propelled South Melbourne to successive Australian titles.

"I put myself in the situation that I've played at some bad clubs and that's when I found it hard to come up, when you're getting beaten every week," Clarkson said.

"Personally I find it easy to play in a good team because you're winning every week and nothing is more enjoyable than winning.

"We have twenty players who can probably play in any other team in the country, so if you want to play you have to play at your best and if you don't you're out of the team."

Postecoglou firmly believes that, unlike the Marconi and Knights teams which chased the elusive championship triple, the focus has been drawn well away from the South Melbourne camp.

Expansion clubs from Auckland and Parramatta and



David Clarkson: "We have twenty players who can probably play in any other team in the country."

the continued progress of Northern Spirit and Perth Glory have taken the defending champs out of the spotlight.

"I also think last year we carried that back-to-back thing and really put some pressure on ourselves as a group," he said.

"It was a difficult year in so many ways and in the end it was a relief to get through it and I think now that this group has actually proved that it's a great team and we don't have to go out and prove points.

"I really believe that the pressure is off us to a certain degree." The 93-game coach (NSL career record of 54 wins, 20 draws and 19 defeats) is happy to dangle the lure of immortality to his charges, believing that the promise of three consecutive grand final wins should be incentive enough.

"We created club history by going back-to-back last year but everybody knows the history of the club, that we used to win one and then go to sleep for seven years," Postecoglou explained.

"Now the chance to do three in a row — that's never been done in terms of three grand final wins in a row — they can go down as the best club team in the history of the national league.

"That is certainly going to be a spur for them.

"For maybe a Steve Iosifidis or a David Clarkson, who otherwise in terms of their own individual careers have never won major awards, they've got the chance to go down as a part of one of the greatest teams in NSL history and they'll always be remembered.

"That's a huge incentive for them."

FIXTURES 1999/2000

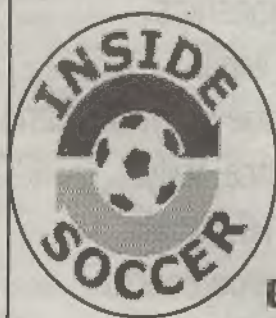


Steve Panopoulos: South's hard-working midfielder

3-OCT-99	WOLLONGONG WOLVES	BRANDON PARK
10-OCT-99	NORTHERN SPIRIT	BOB JANE STADIUM
15-OCT-99	AUCKLAND KINGS	NORTH HARBOUR STADIUM
24-OCT-99	GIPPSLAND FALCONS	BOB JANE STADIUM
31-OCT-99	MARCONI STALLIONS	MARCONI STADIUM
7-NOV-99	MELBOURNE KNIGHTS	BOB JANE STADIUM
12-NOV-99	ADELAIDE FORCE	HINDMARSH STADIUM
21-NOV-99	CANBERRA COSMOS	BOB JANE STADIUM
27-NOV-99	BRISBANE STRIKERS	SUNCORP STADIUM
5-DEC-99	PARRAMATTA POWER	BOB JANE STADIUM
12-DEC-99	PERTH GLORY	PERTH OVAL
19-DEC-99	CARLTON	BOB JANE STADIUM
26-DEC-99	SYDNEY UNITED	EDENSOR PARK
9-JAN-00	WOLLONGONG WOLVES	BOB JANE STADIUM
14-JAN-00	ADELAIDE SHARKS	HINDMARSH STADIUM
23-JAN-00	SYDNEY OLYMPIC	BOB JANE STADIUM
26-JAN-00	SYDNEY OLYMPIC	BELMORE OVAL
30-JAN-00	NEWCASTLE BREAKERS	BOB JANE STADIUM
4-FEB-00	NORTHERN SPIRIT	NORTH SYDNEY OVAL
13-FEB-00	AUCKLAND KINGS	BOB JANE STADIUM
19-FEB-00	GIPPSLAND FALCONS	MOBIL PARK
27-FEB-00	MARCONI STALLIONS	BOB JANE STADIUM
5-MAR-00	MELBOURNE KNIGHTS	KNIGHTS PARK
12-MAR-00	ADELAIDE FORCE	BOB JANE STADIUM
17-MAR-00	CANBERRA COSMOS	BRUCE STADIUM
26-MAR-00	BRISBANE STRIKERS	BOB JANE STADIUM
31-MAR-00	PARRAMATTA POWER	PARRAMATTA STADIUM
9-APR-00	PERTH GLORY	BOB JANE STADIUM
14-APR-00	CARLTON	OLYMPIC PARK
23-APR-00	SYDNEY UNITED	BOB JANE STADIUM
5-MAY-00	NEWCASTLE BREAKERS	BREAKERS STADIUM
14-MAY-00	ADELAIDE SHARKS	BOB JANE STADIUM

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SEND A MESSAGE TO THE SOCCEROOS

As you are all aware, Frank Farina is meeting with the overseas-based players in the UK in early October. Frank thought it might be timely to give the players an idea of the depth of feeling there exists amongst fans about us getting to the next World Cup — so they know that it's not only players who feel that way too, and the extent to which we support them.

His view is that players are just not aware of the depth of passion amongst Australian supporters.

So, if you would like the opportunity to 'speak' to the OS players, this is it!

Please e-mail your message/thoughts/whatever to me Bonnie Merslades (bon@webcity.com.au) by 22 September and they will all be passed to Frank who will take them with him.



Tony Vidmar. One of the star Soccerroos you can send a message to

ADELAIDE FORCE

SEASON PREVIEW

logo and colours, coupled with a long-term plan for success both on and off the field, will hopefully propel the Adelaide Force headlong into the new century.

The variety of changes within the club and the upgrade of Hindmarsh Stadium in progress make this an exciting

defence marshalled by Tobin and Milan Ivanovic.

Add the abilities of existing players like Damien Mori, Carl Veart and Jason Petkovic, and the lineup looks formidable. The squad is rounded out by a number of skilful youngsters, hopeful of a chance to impress, and it is this level of depth, lack-



Aurelio Vidmar: Back in town and looking very sharp for Force.

A NEW FORCE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA?

time for the Adelaide soccer public in general.

The Force had their grand launch in a hanger at Parafield Airport, where media and members saw the transformation details for the first time. Players wore black t-shirts emblazoned with white question marks, and a large square positioned in the middle of a raised stage was shrouded to further enhance the mystery.

Danny Leone, an original player from the Juventus days, Alex Tobin and Joe Mullen's young son Michael arrived by helicopter to symbolise the past, present and future of the club.

Then, with a burst of lights and music, players removed their t-shirts and the canopy dropped to reveal the new logo and name. Adelaide Force had arrived.

The striking new logo, with orange and blue added to the traditional black and white, and the powerful new name are not the only changes around the club as it enters season 1999/2000.

Ned Coten joins them as the new CEO, coming to soccer from a background in the NBL with the Perth Wildcats.

His enthusiastic approach and fresh ideas should build a firm foundation for the Force to build upon.

Personnel changes have also taken place in the off-season, with the departure of players like Dino Mennillo, Brad Armour and David Terminello, as well as the arrival of Aurelio Vidmar, Corey Artone and Ivan Zelic.

Finally, the improvements at Hindmarsh Stadium, due for completion in November, will see the club housed at one of the finest, all-seated soccer-specific stadiums in the country, with a capacity of 15,000 and world-class facilities for players and fans.

Of the new signings, the most prominent is Aurelio Vidmar — Adelaide's favourite son — returning home after a professional stint in Europe and Japan. Vidmar is 32 years old, but looks as fit and hungry as he did ten years ago and should add experience and power into the side's forward line.

Skilled midfielder Artone will inject his talents into the Force midfield, and towering young defender Zelic bolsters the already miserly

ing last year, which makes the new season so promising for the Force.

And of course, master coach Zoran Matic is still in charge, and will continue to use his experience and ideas to mould this side into the winning unit their supporters demand.

In summary, the upcoming Ericsson

Cup season will be one of excitement for the Adelaide Force. A new beginning in every sense, this proud club will want to retain the successful image of its past sides, and strive towards expanding the supporter base it presently has.

Promotion and marketing to widen soccer's appeal will be as important as winning on the park, and the Force will not be left behind in this new era for Australian soccer.

If energy and enthusiasm is anything to go by, the club is set for a successful year and a promising future.

FIXTURES FOR 99/2000

1-Oct-99	Canberra Cosmos
Bruce Stadium	
9-Oct-99	Brisbane Strikers
Suncorp Stadium	
15-Oct-99	Parramatta Power
Hindmarsh Stadium	
24-Oct-99	Perth Glory
Perth Oval	
29-Oct-99	Carlton
Hindmarsh Stadium	
7-Nov-99	Sydney United
Edensor Park	
12-Nov-99	South Melbourne
Hindmarsh Stadium	
19-Nov-99	Newcastle Breakers
Breakers Stadium	
26-Nov-99	Southern Stars
Hindmarsh Stadium	
5-Dec-99	Sydney Olympic
Belmore Oval	
10-Dec-99	Wollongong Wolves
Hindmarsh Stadium	
17-Dec-99	Northern Spirit
North Sydney Oval	
26-Dec-99	Auckland Kings
Hindmarsh Stadium	
2-Jan-00	Gippsland
Falcons Mobil Park	
7-Jan-00	Canberra Cosmos
Hindmarsh Stadium	
16-Jan-00	Melbourne Knights
Knights Park	
28-Jan-00	Marconi Stallions
Hindmarsh Stadium	
4-Feb-00	Brisbane Strikers
Hindmarsh Stadium	
11-Feb-00	Parramatta Power
Parramatta Stadium	
18-Feb-00	Perth Glory
Hindmarsh Stadium	
25-Feb-00	Carlton
Olympic Park	
3-Mar-00	Sydney United
Hindmarsh Stadium	
12-Mar-00	South Melbourne

Bob Jane Stadium	
17-Mar-00	Newcastle Breakers
Hindmarsh Stadium	
24-Mar-00	Adelaide Sharks
Hindmarsh Stadium	
31-Mar-00	Sydney Olympic
Hindmarsh Stadium	
9-Apr-00	Wollongong Wolves
Brandon Park	
14-Apr-00	Northern Spirit
Hindmarsh Stadium	
21-Apr-00	Auckland Kings
North Harbour Stadium	
28-Apr-00	Gippsland Falcons
Hindmarsh Stadium	
7-May-00	Marconi Stallions
Marconi Stadium	
12-May-00	Melbourne Knights

Home Ground: Hindmarsh Stadium, Holden St., Hindmarsh
Coach: Zoran Matic
Captain: Alex Tobin
Honours: NSL Champions 1986, 1991/92 and 1993/94
Player Losses: Dino Mennillo, Brad Armour, Mark Yates, Travis Dodd, David Terminello
Player Gains: Aurelio Vidmar, Ivan Zelic, Corey Artone
Likely Team: Petkovic, Tobin, Ivanovic, Zelic, Costanzo, Kim, Talladira, Artone, Vidmar, Veart, Mori.

LIKELY SQUAD:
(with additions to be made)

Jason Petkovic	Goalkeeper
Anthony Breaden	Goalkeeper
Ivan Zelic	Defender
Alex Tobin	Defender
Milan Ivanovic	Defender
Angelo Costanzo	Defender
Dongli Kim	Defender
Nick Sabljak	Midfielder
Carlo Talladira	Midfielder
Corey Artone	Midfielder
Bradley Hassell	Midfielder
Aurelio Vidmar	Midfielder
Damien Mori	Forward
Carl Veart	Forward
Matthew Kemp	Midfielder
Nathan Day	Forward



www.adelaideforce.com.au



Damien 'Froggy' Mori: His partnership upfront with Vidmar should be exciting for Force.

RADIO SOCCER?

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Newcastle's dynamic striker John 'Jockey' Buonavoglia

By Michael Kmet

The Breakers performed well above expectations last season finishing in eighth place. The signing of Lee Sterrey as coach was a revelation and he used what little resources he had to build a very competitive outfit. Sterrey's successful tactics was to play defensive and then counter attack through the pace of exciting striker John Buonavoglia. Newcastle had one of the most frugal defences in the league through the efforts of captain Shane Pryce, Todd McManus, Robert Shannon and goalkeeper Bob Catlin.

CHANGES IN PERSONNEL

Gains: Travis Dodd (Adelaide City), Vasko Trpceviski (Perth Glory), Luke Tomich (Marconi), Robert Angievski



Bob Catlin. The rock at the back of the mean Breakers defence.

(Sydney United), Andy Harper (Brisbane Strikers) (not confirmed at time of writing).

Losses: Andrew Borghetto (released), Tom Haythornthwaite (retired), Josh Maguire (released), Robert Shannon (back to Scotland), Fouad Umlil (Edgeworth Eagles), Sang-Chul Yoon and Peter Richie.

KEY PLAYERS

The Breakers season will once again depend on the defensive wall of keeper Bob Catlin, sweeper Shane Pryce, and stopper Todd McManus. All three had outstanding seasons last year and will be integral to the Breakers' hopes. The leadership and performances of Pryce could see him wearing a Soccerroo jersey this year.

The signings of Luke Tomich, Andy Harper, Vasko Trpceviski, and Robert Angievski will see the Breakers finally

have the attacking options to ensure a playoff position.

Crowd favourite John Buonavoglia was the "lone ranger" up front last season, but this year will have the support to improve the Breakers' goal tally.

The signing of ex-Young Soccerroo Travis Dodd will go a long way in filling the hole left by Scot Rob Shannon.

YOUNG PLAYER TO WATCH.
Midfielder Greg Owens announced

ket will once again be the staple for the club's crowd. Newcastle soccer's strong junior base ensures that there are plenty of children at home games.

Last year's solid performance saw crowds increase by twenty percent. The Breakers are hoping to consistently average over five thousand a game this season.

And if more success comes on the park the potential for growth is enormous given that it does not have to compete

STERREY'S BREAKERS TO SURPRISE AGAIN?

himself to the National League last year with two thirty metre volleys to give the Breakers a remarkable 3-2 home win over the Perth Glory. Owens has excellent speed and ball techniques to match.

He is not afraid to run at defenders, and as shown last season, not afraid to shoot when given the opportunity.

KEY TO SUCCESS

The Breakers' season will once again be dependent on how coach Lee Sterrey moulds a young team into a formidable winning outfit.

Sterrey was a breath of fresh air to Newcastle soccer and quickly became a media favourite in the area with his approachable and amiable personality.

Players that were under achieving in past seasons were different players under the guidance of Sterrey. Sterrey has made some astute signings this year and will have more attacking options to strengthen an already water-tight defence. How he uses these options will determine the Breakers' season.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

The Breakers are in the later processes of handing over ownership to Central Coast businessman David Hall. The new owner will bring an injection of much needed funds to the Breakers which will put them in the healthiest financial position in their history.

The Breakers have also unofficially signed a major sponsor which should be announced in the near future. The demise of national basketball team the Newcastle Falcons has seen corporate interest in the Breakers increase.

MARKETING STRATEGY

The appointment of former Newcastle Falcons Marketing Manager Marty Mclean as the new Breakers Sales and Marketing Manager has seen the club target the corporate dollar in its pre season drive.

This has resulted in their corporate boxes being close to full capacity and partnerships with many new organisations.

The Breakers traditional family mar-

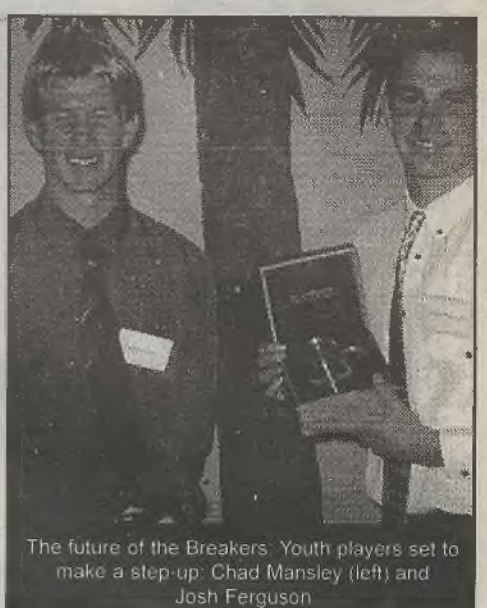
with the Newcastle Falcons who often had home games on the same night as the



Breakers skipper Shane Pryce

99/2000 FIXTURES

3-Oct-99	Sydney Olympic
Belmore Oval	
8-Oct-99	Wollongong Wolves
Breakers Stadium	
15-Oct-99	Northern Spirit
North Sydney Oval	
22-Oct-99	Auckland Kings
Breakers Stadium	
30-Oct-99	Gippsland Falcons
Mobil Park	
5-Nov-99	Marconi Stallions
Breakers Stadium	
14-Nov-99	Melbourne Knights
Knights Park	
19-Nov-99	Adelaide Force
Breakers Stadium	
26-Nov-99	Canberra Cosmos
Bruce Stadium	
3-Dec-99	Brisbane Strikers
Breakers Stadium	
10-Dec-99	Parramatta Power
Parramatta Stadium	
17-Dec-99	Perth Glory
Breakers Stadium	
26-Dec-99	Carlton
Olympic Park	
2-Jan-00	Sydney United



The future of the Breakers. Youth players set to make a step-up: Chad Mansley (left) and Josh Ferguson

Breakers.

PERFORMANCE FORECAST

Fifth. By strengthening their squad Newcastle should improve on last season's eighth placing and a play-off berth is a very realistic chance.

The Breakers appear to have overcome last year's goal scoring problem with the signing of Luke Tomich, Andy Harper, and the creative mid-field duo of Vasko Trpceviski and Robert Angievski.

Breakers Stadium	
7-Jan-00	Sydney Olympic
Breakers Stadium	
21-Jan-00	Adelaide Sharks
Breakers Stadium	
26-Jan-00	Adelaide Sharks
Hindmarsh Stadium	
30-Jan-00	South Melbourne
Bob Jane Stadium	
6-Feb-00	Wollongong Wolves
Brandon Park	
11-Feb-00	Northern Spirit
Breakers Stadium	
18-Feb-00	Auckland Kings
North Harbour Stadium	
25-Feb-00	Gippsland Falcons
Breakers Stadium	
5-Mar-00	Marconi Stallions
Olympic Park	
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Breakers Stadium	
17-Mar-00	Adelaide Force
Hindmarsh Stadium	
24-Mar-00	Canberra Cosmos
Breakers Stadium	
1-Apr-00	Brisbane Strikers
Suncorp Stadium	
7-Apr-00	Parramatta Power
Breakers Stadium	
16-Apr-00	Perth Glory
Perth Oval	
21-Apr-00	Carlton
Breakers Stadium	
30-Apr-00	Sydney United
Edensor Park	
5-May-00	South Melbourne
Breakers Stadium	

Please note all fixtures are subject to change. These are correct at time of press. Check local media for your team.

GIPPSLAND FALCONS

SEASON PREVIEW

GIPPSLAND FALCONS SQUAD 1999/2000		
1	GOALKEEPER	BOJO JEVDJEVIC
2	DEFENDER	JEFF HOPKINS
3	DEFENDER (COACH)	MANNY GOTIS
4	DEFENDER	JOHN BUHARGIAR
5	DEFENDER	*DEAN FAK
6	DEFENDER/MIDFIELDER	DOUG MARCINA
7	DEFENDER	ADRIAN SAVAGE
8	MIDFIELDER/DEFENDER	CLAYTON BELL
9	MIDFIELDER	ANDY VARGAS
10	MIDFIELDER	WILL HASTIE
11	MIDFIELDER	SANDY ROBERTSON
12	MIDFIELDER	JOHN HUTCHINSON
14	DEFENDER	MICHAEL KATZ
15	STRIKER	MARCO PERINOVIC
16	STRIKER	SASH BEGINOVSKI
17	STRIKER	*JUAN NILO
18	STRIKER	ROBERT PUCA
19	MIDFIELDER	*MEHMET DURAKOVIC
22	DEFENDER	BRIAN MACNICOL
	MIDFIELDER/STRIKER	

By Lucio Viggiano

KEY PLAYERS FOR 1999/2000 SEASON

Mehmet Durakovic at sweeper; he will bring much needed experience and leadership to the back half for Falcons and his influence on the players around him will be crucial to the Falcons being competitive this season.

Sandy Robertson as midfield general; ex UK professional, joined the Falcons towards the end of last season. Has returned to bring creativity and experience to the Falcons midfield. A fit and

expected from him.

KEY TO SUCCESS

The key to a successful 1999/2000 season for the Falcons is to solve their goal-scoring drought. This is the biggest challenge for new coach Jeff Hopkins who has a squad that showed last season it is capable of matching it in general play, but unless a consistent goal scorer can be found, will struggle to make any impact on the competition.

Although the squad is not star-studded, Hopkins has at his disposal the nucleus of a competitive squad with experi-

enced NSL players such as Gotis, Marcina, Hastie, Bell, Vargas, MacNicol and Perinovic, complemented by promising young players such as Hutchinson, Puca and Katz.

The scenario is quite simple, unless the Falcons invest in a recognised striker or manage to pull one out of a hat; it will be a long and barren season for Hopkins and the faithful supporters down in Gippsland.

FINANCIAL SITUATION AND MARKETING STRATEGY

The Falcons have survived a traumatic period that almost saw its demise on several occasions over the past twelve months.

The members have adopted a new constitution and management structure for the club and having survived a period of voluntary administration, is now in a position to consolidate and build towards a successful future in the NSL.

New executive member Peter Quirk has brought a breath of professionalism and business experience to the club with the major sponsorships announced recently with Siemens Ltd, Covo Sports and a major player in the Australian Insurance industry Oamps Ltd.

As reported in the Latrobe Valley Express newspaper on the 6th September, 1999; 'Siemens Ltd, Oamps Ltd and Covo Sports have all agreed to invest money into the club for an initial period of three years, boosting revenue at Mobil Park by somewhere in the vicinity of \$100,000 per year.

'Club officials said that the new sponsorship arrangement is subject to performance and could increase further if the "Team Gippsland Sports" concept continued to develop. ... The Falcons were aiming to secure \$500,000 in sponsorship before Christmas, which would cover about half of the soccer operations costs for the season.

'The remainder will be raised

Inside

through avenues such as gate takings, memberships, concerts, social functions and the poker machines.

'This new sponsorship deal means viability for the coming season but more importantly shows that the club is looking towards the future.

'The "Team Gippsland Sports" concept is an initiative to expand the Mobil Park facilities by encompassing local basketball, rugby, hockey, netball, football and golf clubs of the region into a central location and social facility,' it said.

The Gippsland region has always had a strong soccer tradition and to this day maintains a high level of soccer participation from Sale through to Warragul at both junior and senior levels.

With over 100,000 inhabitants within a 50km radius, the Falcons have the potential to consistently draw over 5,000 supporters to home games.

Past seasons have shown that Gippsland people will support a successful team and the challenge for the new executive management is to regain the support of the local community.

In recent times, marketing has taken a back seat at the Falcons where fighting fires and ensuring the clubs survival has been of a greater priority.

With the worst behind them, the club recognises that they have a real challenge ahead and the easiest way to get the local community on board is to get results on the park.

A change to Saturday evening home games has also been a step in the right direction.

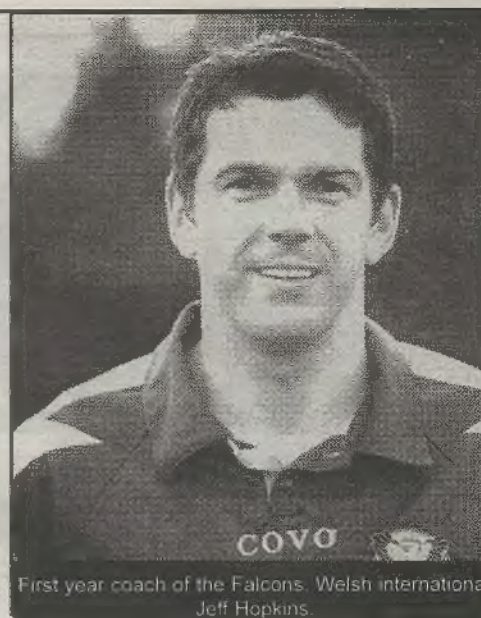
PERFORMANCE FORECAST

Realistically it is difficult to see the Falcons finishing above the bottom four places with the current squad that Jeff Hopkins has at his disposal.

Optimistically, if the club can find a consistent goal scorer and solve their goal drought from last season, a mid-table finish is not beyond them.

CHANGES IN PERSONNEL SINCE LAST YEAR

New: Doug Marcina from Canberra Cosmos. Ex-Falcon and an experienced and consistent NSL player who will bring much needed speed and flair to the wing-



First year coach of the Falcons. Welsh international Jeff Hopkins.

back role.

Jonathan Buhargiar was promoted from Falcons Youth squad Young local defender who has come up through the junior ranks.

* Possible signings at time of going to print: Dean Fak: from Port Melbourne (Vic Premier League). Experienced central defender from the Victorian Premier League with NSL experience with the now defunct Collingwood.

Juan Nilo from Bentleigh Greens (Vic Premier League) An ex-Falcons youth team player. Speedy and skilful forward who has built a reputation in the Victorian Premier League as a consistent goal scorer at Sunshine George Cross and more recently with Bentleigh Greens.

Departed: Stuart Munro has gone across to rivals Carlton as senior coach; Claudio Canosa has hung up his boots after providing great service and leadership to the Falcons since their early days in the NSL.

Levent Osman currently in Germany after unsuccessfully chasing a professional contract, appears set to sign with NSL newcomer the Auckland Kingz; Chris Ball last season's backup to Jevdjovic has returned home to WA; Michael Anderson, Peter Di Iorio and Billy Mitroulas have all gone to pursue their careers elsewhere.

MY TOP SIX PREDICTIONS FOR THIS SEASON

1. Marconi Stallions - (If Eddie says so, who am I to argue!)
2. South Melbourne - (Have the depth and consistency to be up amongst it yet again)
3. Perth Glory - (Too much class to not be a contender in 1999/2000)
4. Parramatta Power - (Sydney Utd of 1998/99 without the off-field hassles)
5. Northern Spirit - (Provided they don't do a Carlton in their second year)
6. Adelaide Force - (Will not be a force, but Zoran will still get them up there!)
- **7. Gippsland Falcons - (My heart will never give them away!)

consistent Sandy Robertson is crucial for a competitive season by the Falcons.

Marco Perinovic as centre-forward; fiery big man that makes position well and offers a target up forward. If he manages to stay fit and disciplined the goals will inevitably come, if the Falcons can find him the right partner up forward.

YOUNG PLAYER TO WATCH

Twenty year old, former Perth Italia and West Australian State representative, Robert Puca is the player to watch at the Falcons this season.

Robert, a skilful attacking midfielder with a never-say-die attitude is into his second year with the Falcons and with a season under his belt, a big year is

FIXTURES 99/2000

*subject to change.

2-OCT-99	PERTH GLORY
MOBIL PARK	
8-OCT-99	CARLTON
OLYMPIC PARK	
16-OCT-99	SYDNEY UNITED
MOBIL PARK	
24-OCT-99	SOUTH MELBOURNE
BOB JANE STADIUM	
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MOBIL PARK	
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HINDMARSH STADIUM	
13-NOV-99	SYDNEY OLYMPIC
MOBIL PARK	
21-NOV-99	WOLLONGONG WOLVES
BRANDON PARK	
27-NOV-99	NORTHERN SPIRIT
MOBIL PARK	
4-DEC-99	AUCKLAND KINGS
NORTH HARBOUR STADIUM	
18-DEC-99	MARCONI STALLIONS
MOBIL PARK	
26-DEC-99	MELBOURNE KNIGHTS
KNIGHTS PARK	
2-JAN-00	ADELAIDE FORCE
MOBIL PARK	
9-JAN-00	PERTH GLORY
PERTH OVAL	
15-JAN-00	BRISBANE STRIKERS
MOBIL PARK	
21-JAN-00	PARRAMATTA POWER

PARRAMATTA STADIUM

26-JAN-00	PARRAMATTA POWER
MOBIL PARK	
28-JAN-00	CANBERRA COSMOS
BRUCE STADIUM	
5-FEB-00	CARLTON
MOBIL PARK	
13-FEB-00	SYDNEY UNITED
EDENSOR PARK	
19-FEB-00	SOUTH MELBOURNE
MOBIL PARK	
25-FEB-00	NEWCASTLE BREAKERS
BREAKERS STADIUM	
4-MAR-00	ADELAIDE SHARKS
MOBIL PARK	
12-MAR-00	SYDNEY OLYMPIC
BELMORE OVAL	
18-MAR-00	WOLLONGONG WOLVES
MOBIL PARK	
24-MAR-00	NORTHERN SPIRIT
NORTH SYDNEY OVAL	
1-APR-00	AUCKLAND KINGZ
MOBIL PARK	
16-APR-00	MARCONI STALLIONS
MARCONI STADIUM	
22-APR-00	MELBOURNE KNIGHTS
MOBIL PARK	
28-APR-00	ADELAIDE FORCE
HINDMARSH STADIUM	
6-MAY-00	CANBERRA COSMOS
MOBIL PARK	
13-MAY-00	BRISBANE STRIKERS
SUNCORP STADIUM	

WOLLONGONG WOLVES

SEASON PREVIEW

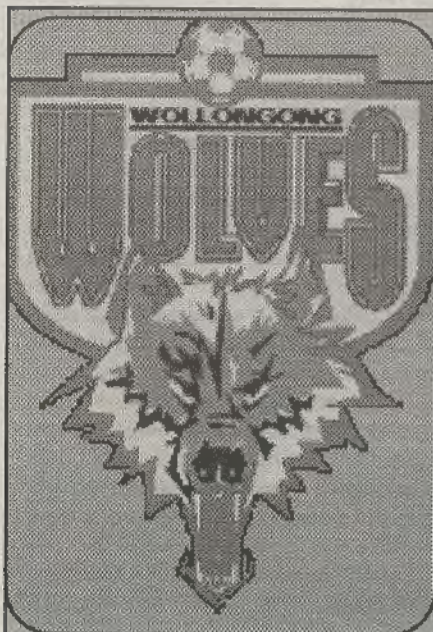
By Steven Webb

Wollongong Wolves start the 1999/2000 season planning to repeat the success of 1998/99 ... maybe even going further.

General Manager Graeme Haney said the weight of expectation after finishing fourth the previous season made it difficult and, ultimately, disappointing for the

Alvin Ceccoli to a Greek club and, though often controlling the middle of the pitch, couldn't put the ball in the net often enough.

Haney found some good signs: the emergence of "Rookie of the Year" Paul Reid from the youth team, Ceccoli and Chipperfield being selected for the Australian team, Sebastian Sinozic being picked for the Olyroos and the improving



1. LESLIE POGLIACOMI GOALKEEPER
2. GEORGE SOURIS DEFENDER
3. ALVIN CECCOLI MIDFIELD
4. ROBERT STANTON DEFENDER
5. DAVID CERVINSKI DEFENDER

6. MATTHEW HORSLEY MIDFIELD
7. PAUL REID MIDFIELD
8. ANTONY SURJAN MIDFIELD
9. SASHO DIMOSKI MIDFIELD
10. (NEW STRIKER)
11. SCOTT CHIPPERFIELD MIDFIELD/STRIKER
12. NEIL HARLOCK MIDFIELD
13. NOEL SPENCER MIDFIELD
14. SASO PETROVSKI STRIKER
15. DAVID HUXLEY DEFENDER/MIDFIELD
16. PETER LAHANAS DEFENDER/MIDFIELD
17. ESALA MASI STRIKER
18. CHAD BISHOP MIDFIELD
19. PAUL DIMECH DEFENDER
20. DANIEL BELTRAME GOALKEEPER
21. CHRISTIAN ZELVIS MIDFIELD

HEAD COACH:

NICK

THEODORAKOPOULOS

club last year.

"When it didn't happen again, instead of lifting we went down. Three senior players contracted illnesses early in the season and the team didn't really recover."

Nevertheless, he said, Wolves proved they could match anyone. They defeated Perth Glory away, beat South Melbourne and Northern Spirit and had some good draws against teams that made the finals.

Consistency let Wolves down — they faltered against lesser opponents.

They lost forward strength with the sale of Kosta Salapasis and loaning

performance of goalkeeper Daniel Beltrame.

The core team for 1999/2000 remains the same. Ceccoli is back from Greece (though still recovering from a knee injury) and Neil Harlock has returned from New Zealand.

Peter Lahanas, also from a Greek club, is working his way into rotation as an attacking defender.

Haney said this season Wolves would build from the back, springboarding attacks from the "Wolves Wall". Pre-season tactics had seen the players adjusting skills to cover one another differently.

"The emphasis will still be on fast, open, attractive football," he said.

"But we'll slot home a greater percentage of chances."

KEY PLAYERS

The players of influence in the side will be Beltrame in goals (if he wins the tussle with Les Pogliacomi for the No 1 shirt) and the defensive unit.

George Souris will again have to contribute a "player of the year" performance and Stanton, Huxley and Ceccoli will need to match him.

Up front, Scott Chipperfield could be moving back to a striker's position, rather than playing on the left, and usurping classy midfield distributor Antony Surjan as top goal scorer?

Chipperfield, Masi and Petrovski will be competing for spots with another yet-to-be-discovered striker.

David Cervinski will come into the Wolves squad a week before the season starts, but will be fit from his stint playing in Singapore.

Noel Spencer has made a huge comeback from injury last season and is looking very strong and captain Matthew Horsley is, as always, ready to give 125 per cent.

All the senior players will be under pressure from emerging young stars like Paul Dimech ("a terrier type who chases anything"), Chad Bishop, who can be brilliant on his day, and Christian Zelvis, an Australian Schoolboy last year.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Haney is hopeful that the squad puts in the hard work. "If we do that there is no doubt we'll make the playoffs."

Wolves' financial situation is no less precarious than that of many other clubs. Income from sponsorship and ticket

sales can't match rapidly rising player payments.

Wollongong is still working toward fielding a team of full-time professionals.

Several senior players in the current team already have full-time jobs and could be facing hard decisions. And the club could find it hard to replace them.

At the time of writing the Wolves' Marketing Manager's position is vacant.

The main emphasis, however, will be to broaden the club's supporter base and continue its appeal to families — hence Sunday games, lots of activities around the ground and, of course, entertaining football.

Haney said Wolves' strategy for the season was to "win every game".

Short of that, Wollongong would field a good, solid team and make each match they played a footballing event.

If everything goes according to plan Wolves will make the playoffs. From there ... it's anybody's.

FIXTURES 99/2000

*SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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17-OCT-99	ADELAIDE SHARKS
BRANDON PARK	
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BRANDON PARK	
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NORTH SYDNEY OVAL	
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BRANDON PARK	
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MOBIL PARK	
26-MAR-00	MARCONI
BRANDON PARK	
2-APR-00	MELB KNIGHTS
KNIGHTS PARK	
9-APR-00	ADELAIDE FORCE
BRANDON PARK	
14-APR-00	CANBERRA COSMOS
BRUCE STADIUM	
23-APR-00	BRISBANE STRIKERS
BRANDON PARK	
28-APR-00	PARRA POWER
PARRAMATTA STADIUM	
7-MAY-00	PERTH GLORY
BRANDON PARK	
12-MAY-00	CARLTON
OLYMPIC PARK	

HERE'S HOPING FOR A
TOP SIX LIKE:

SOUTH MELBOURNE
MARCONI
PARRAMATTA
WOLVES
NORTHERN SPIRIT
PERTH

BRISBANE STRIKERS

SEASON PREVIEW

By Cameron Atfield

It seems like an eternity ago now. Who can forget the day Frank Farina held aloft the Ericsson Cup in front of over 40,000 screaming Queenslanders in one of the great moments in Brisbane sport.

Not to mention the greatest day the National Soccer League competition has seen

player

The Strikers have also lost their only other Soccerroo in the shape of Steve Laybutt. He will join new side Parramatta Power after a stint in the J-League with Bellmare Hiratsuka.

Joining Laybutt at Bellmare Hiratsuka is Chay Hews, who will return to the Strikers after his loan deal comes to an end

Two Strikers stalwarts have headed south

In a blow to most Strikers fans, Kiwi captain Chris Zoricich is on his way to Sydney Olympic after being told by Kosmina he was no longer wanted at the club. Kosmina could well live to regret that decision

Foundation player Sean Cranney has moved south in search of a Sydney contract. He is hoping to link up again with brother Troy at Northern Spirit. Marconi is also believed to have shown interest.

Promising youngster Andy Packer has joined Carlton, and Reece Tollenare has been released

The only significant signings so far

Of course, Farina is long gone - along with the optimism, excitement and scintillating play that marked season 1996/97 as the Year of the Striker.

LAST YEAR

The post-championship year was a disaster for the Strikers. After a well-documented case of "premiership hangover", the legendary Farina left for Marconi in acrimonious circumstances.

Former Newcastle Breakers coach John Kosmina was hired for the start of last season.

Following on from such a disastrous 1997-98 season was always going to be a tough ask for Kosmina, but the Strikers were still six points away from a finals berth.

Is season 1999/2000 the year of rebirth for Queensland's sole representative in the National League?

CHANGES IN PERSONNEL

There have been a number of key departures for the Strikers this season.

The departure of gifted midfielder Kasey Wehrman is a body-blow to any chances the Strikers may have had.

He is off to Perth Glory in a deal believed to be worth in excess of \$150,000 a year

The Strikers' most prized home-grown Soccerroo is widely regarded amongst fans as perhaps the best player in the club's history - certainly up there with the inspirational Frank Farina.

The fact Wehrman at times carried the team with a foot injury that never fully healed speaks volumes for his talent as a

have been experienced striker Paul Foster from Northern Spirit and Leo Langone from the Canberra Cosmos

Foster, brother of Crystal Palace's Craig, has had extensive experience in Asia but failed to make an impact with the Spirit last season. He will probably partner Stuart McLaren up front in what will be quite a handy front line.

Langone has had experience playing in Argentina, and he played under Kosmina at the Breakers where he was a favourite amongst the fans. He has also impressed during his two stints with the Cosmos.

Kosmina has also been scouting the XXXX League for new talent. He has signed David Pilic from Rochedale Rovers and forward Greg di Losa from Brisbane Lions.

There are a number of players still on trial. The squad is expected to be finalised early this week.

KEY PLAYERS

Des Hughes and Stuart McLaren fought it out for the position of last year's find of the year. Hughes, signed on loan from local XXXX League side Taringa Rovers, never failed to impress in the mid-field

McLaren, who has played in Scotland with Stirling Albion, was signed from Hong Kong side Rangers and quickly displayed a knack for scoring goals

He could form an exciting partnership with Paul Foster, but there are whispers Kosmina may use him in defence.

As always, a lot will depend on the form of former Young Soccerroo goalkeeper

er Clint Bolton.

On his day, there is no doubting the 24-year-old's ability as one of the better keepers in the country

Sadly for Clint (and Strikers fans), these bursts of brilliance have been a little sporadic in recent times.

Having a defender of the calibre of Glenn Gwynne in front of him will certainly help

Gwynne is expected to retain the captain's armband and is a mainstay in the Strikers defence. His skill and courage is an inspiration to his teammates

More than matching Gwynne in the toughness stakes is the fiery Nick Meredith

His hot-headed style can get him into trouble every now and then, but that is expected from the aggressive game he plays. His long-distance shots on goal are sure to attract groans and cheers all season.

YOUNG PLAYERS TO WATCH

One youngster to watch is 19 year-old former Southport junior Shane Stefanutto. He proved to be a bit of a livewire last season and, although he has a lot to learn, he has shown great potential

Young guns Jade North and Wayne Shroj will return from the AIS in January. They will no doubt be better players for the experience.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

For the Strikers to be competitive, they will need to cover the losses of so many key players. Coach Kosmina has a lot of youth at his disposal, but whether they can step up in the senior ranks will be a hard test

Crossing has also been a problem in recent times for the Strikers. Kosmina will need his flankers to lift their game if they are to challenge the six.



FINANCIAL SITUATION

New chairman Tony Petty is perhaps the most important arrival for the Strikers.

Rumours around the traps suggest a cash injection of around \$1.2-5 million is on the cards - an amount sure to lessen the financial burdens of the club

Petty's arrival has brought with it a renewed air of optimism surrounding the club.

FORECAST

A top six position will probably be out of reach. Tenth will be a more realistic position in what will be a rebuilding year for the former champions.

*More club previews on page 14

FIXTURES 99/2000

*SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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KNIGHTS PARK
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SUNCORP STADIUM
15-OCT-99 CAN COSMOS
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NORTH HARBOUR STADIUM
13-MAY-00 GIPP FALCONS
SUNCORP STADIUM

ange POSTECOGLOU

PART TWO: THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT AS LONG AS...

In the last few years, the first generation of NSL players has moved on to coaching the NSL clubs. Perhaps as a result of the far-sightedness of those who pushed for the creation of a national league, who knew the rise in standards that would ensue, when Soccer Australia was looking to appoint a new national coach, the four serious contenders were all not just locally-based coaches, but coaches who'd mainly learnt their football here in Australia.

Postecoglou was one of the four contenders, although history will now record it went to another: Frank Farina. I asked him how seriously a contender did he think he was, and what is his reaction to Farina's appointment.

"I remember thinking during the year that I'd be surprised if they did appoint a local coach, so I didn't give it much serious thought. I thought I was better off concentrating on being successful (at South), and that I could think about (the national job) a bit down the track. But then the season was over and it looked like they were going to appoint a local coach.

"I started thinking about it - whether I did want it, and whether I thought I was capable of doing it.

"There are perceptions that I lack international experience, and that's the most difficult thing for me to overcome - I can't now pull on the boots and play for an overseas club.

"But I knew my coaching record was probably the best in the country over the last three years, and I went (for discussions with Soccer Australia) basing everything on that. I was realistic enough to know that I'd be an outsider at best. I was still disappointed that I didn't get it as I'd thought I could give it a good whack.

"Frank (Farina) was the favourite, and he got the opportunity. The positive that came out of it was that regardless of who was appointed, a locally-based guy would get the opportunity. If Frank is successful, then maybe the opportunity will come to the rest of the coaches here.

"The only annoying thing for me was reading media comments about international (playing) experience. I've always felt coaches should be judged on their coaching careers, not their playing careers. There have been many great players who haven't been great coaches.

"I'd like to think that Frank got the job because they thought he'd be a better coach than me, and not because he had a more illustrious playing career. (The lack of an overseas career) certainly hasn't held me back as a coach.

"I'm very confident about my coaching abilities against any coach in this country, or any coach anywhere, because coaching is a totally different art to playing.

"I'd suggest (the people who made those comments) thought I couldn't communicate with, or that I'd not have the respect of, overseas players. It's not a valid argument as far as I'm concerned.

"Players are pretty much the same whether they're here or overseas, whether they're earning a dollar or earning a million.

"You ask any coach at any level - they could be coaching kids - and it's all about the same thing: it's all about communication, and the management of people. It's nothing to do with international (playing) experience."

Postecoglou has had plenty of

opportunity to observe coaches in action at South, he's had a garage-full of coaches, many of them well respected and with an honour-board of achievement behind them.

I asked him which ones stand out in his memory, what has he learnt from them, and why they seemed to arrive and depart so quickly.

"My first coach, before I broke into the first team, was Rale Rasic. He was probably the biggest name going around at the time. But he didn't last very long, maybe just half a season.

"Then Lennie McKendrie took over, and he is arguably the most successful in terms of winning Championships, and on a win-loss ratio, probably has the best record of any coach.

"John Margaritis had an illustrious

sacking coaches), and regardless of the success and the high profiles of the other coaches, they've never lasted this long.

"The lack of (coaching) stability was one of the reasons why there was a lack of success. In the last couple of years things have settled down, but before that it was: if we lose a game there's something wrong with the coach or there's something wrong with the team, so something's got to change. Alongside that was: if we won a game we were the best team in the country.

"The reality was, we were somewhere in between. People just got too carried away with things. We've got very

In part two, Postecoglou speaks to Inside Soccer's Alan Clark about his disappointment at missing out on the national coaching job, the coaches he has played under or assisted, the tips he has picked up from them, and defines his method of handling the pressure-cooker environment at South Melbourne.

coaching career, and Brian Garvey did very well with us and Heidelberg. And of course Ferenc Puskas took us to the Championship and his name is known all over the world.

"Even before that, Manny Poulidakis and Tommy Docherty were here. So we've always had the high profile coaches - it's just the nature of the club. But spread through that, you've got the lesser-known names who've been given the opportunity - probably Jimmy Prygolos is one that comes to mind and there's a couple of oth-

demanding supporters. Even now, although we've won a couple of Championships, I guarantee that the first game of the year if we're struggling at any stage, the crowd will be on the players' backs.

"It takes very strong people running the club to resist reacting to that.

"In the past they have reacted to pressure from supporters and sponsors and the media, you know: 'South has lost another Preliminary Final - you should get rid of your coach'. It sounds ludicrous

"I know for me to last here three years, I would have to win at least one Championship, and even that would not be a guarantee, because if we won it in our first year and then had a couple of lean years, I still would have been gone."

Angie Postecoglou on the hazards of coaching South

ers sprinkled through.

"They've all had varying degrees of success, but none of them has lasted too long.

"When I took the job, people asked me 'What's your aim?' and I said that if I can become the longest-serving coach this club has ever had I would have done well. I knew all that meant was three years, because no-one had lasted longer than three years.

"I knew for me to last here three years, I would have to win at least one Championship, and even that would not be a guarantee, because if we won it in our first year and then had a couple of lean years, I still would have been gone.

"If I'd stayed here three years, then everything else would have happened because regardless of whether the club thought highly of me, if I wouldn't have been successful, I would have been gone.

"I'm sitting here after three years and it's gone like a blur. We've won a couple of Championships, and this year I probably will become the club's longest-serving coach. I knew the history of the club (in

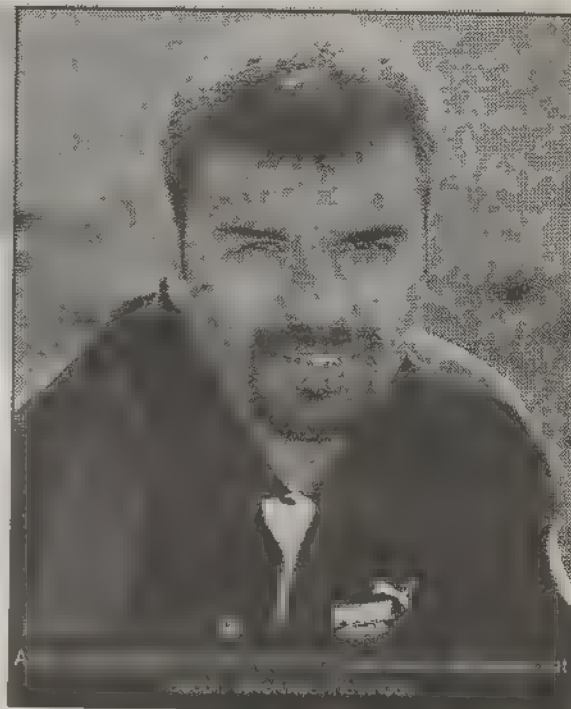
when you've taken your team to a Preliminary Final and you can still get rid of your coach - what does that say to the other teams in the competition - what are they supposed to do?

"Since the early 90s, we've been pretty stable - three or four coaches in ten years is not too bad for a club of this size. The club now realises that you can't just change a coach just because of results or outside perceptions.

"There are certain indicators (of when it's time for a club to dismiss a coach), usually the players are a good guide - the way the team is playing, and the mood around the place. That's often a better guide than the actual results.

"Because I've spent my whole footballing career here, I just know the place. I can read what's going to happen on a daily basis. I know what's going to happen after a loss, and I know what's going to happen after a win.

"I know what's going to happen if we're in a good position (on the ladder) or a lowly one. I know what's going to happen if we lose a player.



"Because I know all that, I can pretty much predict the mood around the place, and what needs to be done to address the situation.

"For example, if we lose, I know people not just inside the club, but around the club are going to panic to a certain extent and think we've got a pretty crappy side even if we're sitting on top of the table. If we win, they'll be talking about popping the champagne corks. So it's just a familiarity for me."

Postecoglou is reserved and thoughtful in manner. He's not a self-promoter although he has much achievement to promote.

He has regularly chided the Melbourne press for its circumspect reporting and commentary on the recent achievements of the club and its players.

At a media function held late last season, the gist of Postecoglou's politely-put grievance was if South Melbourne were reported as the Sydney press reports the achievements of the Sydney clubs, there would be a clamour for every one of South's players to be called up to the national team.

To an extent, it seems that South Melbourne plays in the same reserved, thoughtful, and unflashy manner as if it were in the image of its coach.

It's a team performance - one that asks to be judged on its results and its substance, rather than focussing on individual style or technique.

It's a significant change from earlier South teams where there was ample individual flair, but little team cohesion.

That change must surely be Postecoglou's influence. I wanted to know when it was that the team and its playing style felt as if it was his, rather than still being a remnant of a previous coach's influence.

"When I took over, the team had finished eighth and out of the Finals, which is the worst position we'd been in for about ten years, and to be honest, it was a fairly ordinary team," he noted.

"I must have turned over around ten or eleven players and brought in about seven or eight. So there was a fairly big change in the make-up of the squad from day one (of my tenure) - the core of the group was still the same and there were seven or eight quality players in that group, but I felt that (the ones who had to leave) were not up to the standard we required.

"As soon as I took over I had a sense that this is my team because I'd made a significant amount of changes, but it was probably the Finals series of that first year that I felt we'd started playing the way I'd wanted us to play.

Continued facing page

postecoglou continued



Continued from previous page

"We had to play the Knights, and we'd not beaten them in a Finals series in about five or six years, and we thumped them twice. Then we beat Adelaide City, another team we'd found it hard to get over, and all of a sudden we were starting to look the team I wanted to build.

"This team reflects my personality. People say I'm not as high-profile as some of the other coaches, I tend to be a little more reserved. I think the team reflects that because I've made sure that no individual is greater than anyone else in our dressing-room, and they play that way

"We share the ball around, everyone gets involved. There's not one key player we go to -- someone like Trimmers (captain Paul Trimboli) or Goran Lozanovski is obviously outstanding, but they do things within the team framework.

"That was one of the things I had in my mind about the way I wanted the team to play before I took over, and I've made sure that's happened. It was always going to be about the team unit.

"The players are comfortable about that too. Sometimes you put star billing on a player who carries that extra burden, and he doesn't feel comfortable and his team-mates don't feel comfortable having him built up like that. My players don't carry that burden and they don't get over-looked either -- it's the way we've set it up."

Postecoglou must now motivate himself and his players to start all over again, after South's remarkable three years of success. I asked him how he will motivate himself and how will he reach his players again.

"Because I've been here during the lean times, I know what my motivation is -- I'm just terrified of failure. As much as the great results stuck out in my mind over the last three years, there are three results that stick in my neck, and which motivate me to be successful again.

"The Preliminary Final that we lost against Sydney United in my first year, that was an opportunity lost -- we can't get that back; losing to Carlton (at home in the last round of the 1997/98 season) 0-5, even although that was a dead rubber, meant that we let slip an unbelievable record at home because we didn't prepare properly. I rested players, we were focussed on the Finals, we'd already sewn up top spot -- that loss annoys the buggery out of me.

"And losing 0-1 to Sydney United (in South's last league game of last season) and so losing the minor

Premiership last year. That annoys me immensely.

"Those three results are what's motivating me this year. We can't change that history. If we were able to change those three results, our record would be even better. I don't want (to repeat) results like that, because I don't want to have regrets when I finish my coaching career.

"We've lost other games in that span of time, but I've always felt that we'd given a good account of ourselves. But in those three games, I felt that we'd let the opportunity slip. That's what I'm trying to impress on this group of players, because they've largely known just success."

Finally I asked him what changes have been made to the squad for this year's campaign.

"We've lost Jason Polak and Michael Petkovic. Con Blatsis will probably be with us at least until December, if not the whole season. I'd be very surprised if we lost him before that.

"We're bringing in Anthony Magnacca and Ritchie Alagich who'll be tremendous players for us, and we're starting this season off with people like Robert Liparoti and George Goutzioulis as fully-fledged first-team players. Both have made tremendous strides, at the start of last season they were both question marks. Jimmy Tsekis has got twelve months under his belt, and so our squad is looking so much stronger than at this stage last year.

"The club worked very hard over the off-season to keep its best players, like Goran Lozanovski, John Anastasiadis, Trimmers, and Steve Panopoulos.

"These players were all out of contract and the club re-signed all of them. I'm extremely happy with the composition of the squad the way it is at the moment.

"I'm not a fan of a huge turn-over of players -- we had to do it the first year, but since then I've kept it to a minimum. It's not just about ability, it's about character as well. Maybe Ritchie and Anthony weren't the type of players that had half-a-dozen clubs after them, but I already knew their playing ability and they showed the right character for me to bring them into the dressing-room. Sometimes some of the bigger-name players who everyone's after wouldn't be as useful for us I know because their character wouldn't fit in."

It'd be a foolish person who would exclude South Melbourne from a short-list of Championship contenders this season

WIN TOP-SELLING SOCCER CD

Win a copy of Ice Cream Headache's latest CD - the Canberra Cosmos Supporters' Anthem & Chants! Peter Bayliss (second from left) is the lead singer and bass player of top band Ice Cream Headache. A first name is common to each of the others in the photo: lead guitarist Cole, drummer Price and keyboard star Staff.

Tick which one it is:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diego | <input type="checkbox"/> Franz |
| <input type="checkbox"/> David | <input type="checkbox"/> Edson |

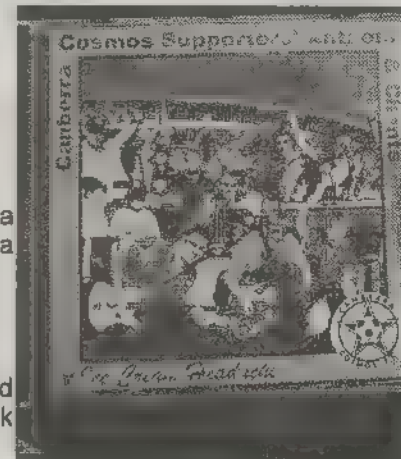
Clues: Cosmos player Arranz, Parramatta Power coach Mitchell and Spurs star Ginola share that first name too!

To enter:

Make your selection, cut out the coupon and post, with your name and address on the back of the envelope to:

ICH CD Competition
1/24 Prince William Drive, Seven Hills NSW 2147

The first correct entry drawn on Friday Oct 1 will win the CD signed by Ice Cream Headache. The winner will be announced in the Inside Soccer issue of Oct 5.



YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A CANBERRA RESIDENT TO WIN!

NSL FRIENDLIES: from east to west

By Paul Goodwin

Spirit saw off the challenge of Canberra Cosmos 2-1 in the inaugural Snowy Hydro Cup on Saturday in Cooma, a scoreline which could have easily been extended according to the club's assistant coach Ian Crook.

Spirit paraded Clayton Zane, just back from a successful trial in Belgium, plus player-coach Graham Arnold and both players scored for the Sydney side, Zane with a header in the 50th and Arnold with a chip in the 65th.

The Canberra Cosmos side responded late through a Glen Kolpak goal in the 88th (full match report on page 17).

Parramatta Power's trip to the West turned sour when they went down 2-3 to an Under 23 Western Australian representative side in a match at the Inglewood Stadium.

The Sydney side were 2-0 up at half time, but a missed penalty by Joel Griffiths in the second half, which could have seen them go 3-1 up, allowed the hard working locals to fight their way back into the game.

To make matters worse Griffiths was sent off with 30 minutes left to go, after a scuffle off the ball with a WA opponent.

Mile Sterjovski had Power ahead early with a great shot and added to his tally later in the first half with a well struck penalty.

The very impressive WA Under 23 player, Anthony Caceras, netted nicely after strolling through the defence early in the second period and after the Griffiths penalty miss, Scott Halpin scrambled in the equaliser for the Sandgropers.

Very late in the game the Power defence did a poor marking job on the elusive Caceras, who was able to find enough space to tuck away the winner for the home side.

Though beaten, Parramatta were pleased with the trip and enjoyed the good Wednesday night workout which came on top of a useful game against Perth Glory the previous Sunday.

The real sour note was that, having planned the next match for Friday of the same week in Adelaide, the game has had to be called off due to the uncertainties surrounding the new-look Southern Stars (ex West Adelaide/Adelaide Sharks).

PARRAMATTA POWER

Smith, Elrich, Vrkic, Santalab, Townsend (Eagleton 46), Gibson, Blagojevic (Bennett 46), Campbell, Angelucci (Ardone 70), Sterjovski (Kukucka 46), J Griffiths.

Richard Plesa missed the game with a hamstring injury and Mark Thompson had a groin strain, while Andrew Crews remained on the bench on this occasion.

In another friendly, Perth Glory beat WA U/23 3-1.

Perth Glory 3 (Valle 18*, Ergic 42*,

Boutsianis 65*) WA State U-23 1 (Caceras 78* pen)

Glory's line-up was: 20. Tony Franken (1. Danny Milosevic), 2. Rob Trajkovski (13 James Afkoe), 3. Jamie Hamwell, 8. Gareth Naven, 10. Bobby Despotovski, 14. Dion Valle, 15. Edgar Junior, 16. Con Boutsianis, 17. Vas Kalogeracos, 19. John Carbone, 21. Ivan Ergic.

Chris Dunkerley was at Edensor Park to take a look at Newcastle Breakers. Missing from the Pumas' starting lineup was Kupresak, while Buonovaglia and Wlaczorek were not in the Breakers side.

Lee Sterrey put a 4-4-2 formation on the park with new signing of last week ex Brisbane Striker Andy Harper partnering Luke Tomich up front. The midfield had a creative look with Greg Owens, Mark Wilson, and Vasco Trpceviski all able to create and put the ball on target.

It was a game of two halves. For the first 45 mins the Breakers controlled the game, pushing up at will but never really troubling the United keeper, and the Pumas were reduced to long range attempts.

The first 10 minutes were all Breakers and Trpceviski showed his dead-ball abilities with one just over the bar and another scrambled clear from free-kicks.

That definite danger man Tom Pondeljak started to crank up a gear however and supported by Aytec Genc they were United thin hope. Andy Harper battled hard but his lack of matches and close skills let him down.

It was the Breakers midfield which started with ex United player Robert Angievski and Mark Wilson causing concern for United and attracting heavy tackling. The lone goal of the half was an own goal after a defensive mix-up.

In the second half some "unknowns" came out to impress for Utd and with some intelligent switching of play and aggression they forced two goals past Bobby Catlin, and it was the Breakers through Greg Owens who were reduced to speculative long shots.

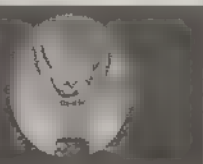
Breakers coach Lee Sterrey said: "I don't pay too much attention to the scoreline in trial games. We needed this run to sweep out the cobwebs but we do need to lift up a gear. With five new faces it was always going to take time."

The best for Newcastle were Angievski, Wilson, and Sprod, and for United, Pondeljak, Genc, and Bosnar.

Breakers line-up: Catlin, Pryce (c), McManus, Roberts, Sprod, Angievski, Wilson, Trpceviski, Owens, Tomich, Harper Subs. 59min Sanderson for Angievski, Mansley for Trpceviski, 66min Dodd for Sprod, 72min Tancheski for Tomich, Wheeler for Pryce.

Sydney United line-up unfortunately unavailable.

Have your say



Just at the time when the AFL is trying to talk up its finals series, along comes more news to knock the wind out of their confidence ... again!

The recent AFL players' association survey indicated that they are just as aware of soccer's potential and growing influence as their "bloody-minded" administrators are. In fact, when asked which sports posed the biggest threat to Rules, an overwhelming 52% indicated that Soccer was easily their biggest challenger nationally, followed by basketball (17%), rugby league (9%) and cricket (7%). Even the AFL's Wayne Jackson was quoted as saying, "...Soccer on a national basis is clearly the greatest threat. Rugby union is strong in one to two states, rugby

league is strong in two states, but soccer with its international perspective has got some growth around the whole of the country" (Herald Sun, 14 September 1999).

Considering quite a few Rules stars played soccer at a young age, the talent drain away from competitions like the AFL is potentially going to be massive when one considers the rapidly increasing numbers of juniors choosing the round ball instead of the oval one.

Many more Aussie kids are idolising Soccer stars both at home and abroad. Something extra for all disillusioned Rules fans and the AFL to ponder.

Mark Fisher, Melbourne

SYDNEY UNITED

SEASON PREVIEW

By John Vrtaric

Sydney United performed above expectations last year, finishing the season as minor premiers and reaching the Grand Final only to lose by the odd goal to South Melbourne.

Last year's coach David Mitchell was forced to basically rebuild the team from

McKinna.

Most of the team was out of contract at the end of the season and the failure of club management to re-sign them during the season resulted in a mass exodus to the newly formed Parramatta Power team.

Even the players who were under contract, Peter Bennett and Andrew

Ante Deak is a young player who has done well in the last two seasons with Melbourne Knights and coach Ratcliffe is expecting a lot from him this year. This campaign he will be one of the key players and will need to rise to the challenge.

A slightly younger player, Steve Bozinovski, is being groomed for bigger and better things and is one to keep an eye as the season unfolds.

KEY TO SUCCESS

The club will be relying on two personalities to drive them to success this year. The president Marko Franovic holds the purse strings and is crucial not only to the club's success but to its very existence.

On field success is very much depended on how well coach Ratcliffe is able to blend his new team. Starting with a brand new team will be a difficult task for him but it has been done before as Mitchell has proven.

Ratcliffe has a small core of excellent players as mentioned above but his achilles heel will be a total lack of depth and a predicted lack of ability to score enough goals.

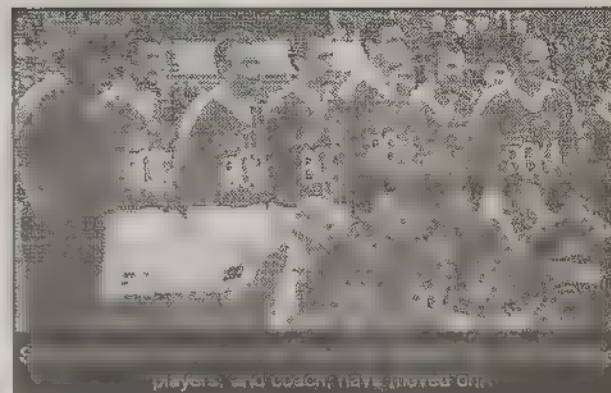
FINANCIAL SITUATION

The club's finances are totally depended on the generosity of Franovic - as long as he is willing to dip into his own pockets the club will be competitive. The long term future, though, is at best uncertain.

Without sponsorship money and significant gate takings United will struggle to attract the players required to be an on field success and if the cash flow becomes a problem during the season they may have trouble to complete the season: Franovic is the key.

MARKETING STRATEGY:

The club has been very quiet on the



marketing front with its main concern during the off season being the re-building of its team.

The club is trying to broaden its support base via a promotional program which includes direct mail, leaflet drops and advertising in the local community newspapers.

This attempt to woo the local community lacks the pizzazz and financial budget that its neighbors, Parramatta Power and Marconi Stallions, are utilising in their marketing strategy.

With all three clubs basically targeting the same market it is unlikely that there will be three winners and United are the most likely to lose out on the latent football supporters existing in the western and south-western suburbs of Sydney.

PREDICTION:

The club has proven its detractors wrong twice in the last two years. After mass exodus of players the team's on field results have been inspiring. Will they be able to achieve it in three consecutive years?

A betting man would not put too much money on them this year and a position in the bottom half is likely, unless Pondeljak, Genc and Deak can lift the team and Ratcliffe is successful in attracting a last minute quality striker.

The lack of depth will be a major problem and a mid table position will be counted as success.

JOHN CRAWLEY	G/KEEPER
RAY YOUNIS	DEFENDER
MARK RACKER	DEFENDER
VELIMIR KUPRESAK	DEFENDER
EDDY BOSNAR	DEFENDER
VINCE SAVOCCA	MIDFIELDER
MIRKO JURILJ	FORWARD
NAHUEL ARRARTE	MIDFIELDER
ANTE MORIC	MIDFIELDER
TOM PONDELJAK	MIDFIELDER
TOM MARIC	FORWARD
KAIN RASTALL	DEFENDER
AYTEC GENC	MIDFIELDER
JOE MORIC	DEFENDER
STEVE BOZINOVSKI	MIDFIELDER
ANTE DEAK	MIDFIELDER
NICK BOSEVSKI	FORWARD (RIGHT)
ABBAS SAAD	FORWARD



scratch for the second year running and performed a minor miracle to reach the heights that they did.

Whilst the team was a no-frills one, relying on team spirit and the expert coaching of Mitchell and his side-kick, Lawrie McKinna, they did have in their team one of the rising stars on the Australian football scene, Mile Stergovski.

The young striker finished second top goal-scorer, behind Olympic's Pablo Cardozo, with sixteen goals and his partnership with fellow Young Soccerroo Joel Griffiths was a key part of United's success last year.

Off the field the club had less success. The crowds were again disappointing with only a couple of the bigger games attracting the sort of crowds that the team deserved.

Lack of finance, and possibly the desire, prevented the club from initiating a marketing push to broaden their appeal and increase match attendance.

United's mainly Croatian support is undergoing a generational change with the older supporters drifting away from the game and their offspring not replacing them in the required numbers.

The reluctance to re-invent themselves from its traditional roots and the decreasing support from within their traditional support does not augur well for the future of the club.

The well documented off-season problems have put the club into a 'prosper or perish' situation. The loss of the entire team, including the coaching duo, for the third year in a row, has put enormous pressure on the incoming coach David Ratcliffe.

LOSSES AND GAINS

United has, again, lost their entire team including the architects of its success last year, coaches Mitchell and

Crews have managed to gain releases and have followed the rest of the team mates.

The only players to remain were the club stalwart Velimir Kupresak and Nathan Day, who is also under contract for the season.

But even Day is, seemingly, lost to the club as he has returned to his home-town Adelaide and is looking for a way out of his contract.

The club's most important gain has been the hiring of experienced coach David Ratcliffe. The former Sydney Olympic and Wollongong coach has an enormous task ahead of him and to finish mid table will be considered a success.

Amongst the player gains the most valuable are the former Melbourne Knights duo of Tom Pondeljak and Ante Deak, together with Spirit's Eddy Bosnar and Aytec Genc (who returns from a stint in Malaysia.)

KEY PLAYERS:

The newcomers, Pondeljak, Deak, Genc and Bosnar, plus the perennial Kupresak, will be the key to the team's success for the '99-2000 season. Bosnar and Kupresak will form the defensive backbone whilst Deak and Pondeljak, along with Ante Moric and Genc, will form a formidable mid-field partnership.

With the likely departure of Day the team's main weakness will be the lack of an experienced striker.

Although Pondeljak can play up front his best position is coming from behind, sitting in behind the strikers, from where he can use his speed to best advantage.

YOUNG PLAYER TO WATCH:

FIXTURES 99/2000

*SUBJECT TO CHANGE

3-OCT-99	NORTHERN SPIRIT
EDENSOR PARK	
10-OCT-99	AUCKLAND KINGS
EDENSOR PARK	
16-OCT-99	GIPP FALCONS
MOBIL PARK	
24-OCT-99	MARCONI
STALLIONS	EDENSOR PARK
31-OCT-99	MELB KNIGHTS
KNIGHTS PARK	
7-NOV-99	ADELAIDE FORCE
EDENSOR PARK	
12-NOV-99	CANBERRA COSMOS
BRUCE STADIUM	
21-NOV-99	BRISBANE STRIKERS
EDENSOR PARK	
26-NOV-99	PARRA POWER
PARRAMATTA STADIUM	
5-DEC-99	PERTH GLORY
EDENSOR PARK	
10-DEC-99	CARLTON
OLYMPIC PARK	
26-DEC-99	SOUTH MELBOURNE
EDENSOR PARK	
2-JAN-00	N BREAKERS
BREAKERS STADIUM	
7-JAN-00	N. SPIRIT
NORTH SYDNEY OVAL	
16-JAN-00	SYDNEY OLYMPIC
EDENSOR PARK	
23-JAN-00	WOLL WOLVES

BRANDON PARK	
26-JAN-00	WOLL WOLVES
EDENSOR PARK	
30-JAN-00	ADELAIDE SHARKS
EDENSOR PARK	
4-FEB-00	AUCKLAND KINGS
NORTH HARBOUR STADIUM	
13-FEB-00	GIPP FALCONS
EDENSOR PARK	
20-FEB-00	MARCONI
STALLIONS	MARCONI STADIUM
27-FEB-00	MELB KNIGHTS
EDENSOR PARK	
3-MAR-00	ADELAIDE FORCE
HINDMARSH STADIUM	
12-MAR-00	CANBERRA COSMOS
EDENSOR PARK	
18-MAR-00	BRISBANE STRIKERS
SUNCORP STADIUM	
26-MAR-00	PARRA POWER
EDENSOR PARK	
2-APR-00	PERTH GLORY
PERTH OVAL	
9-APR-00	CARLTON
EDENSOR PARK	
23-APR-00	SOUTH MELBOURNE
BOB JANE STADIUM	
30-APR-00	N. BREAKERS
EDENSOR PARK	
5-MAY-00	ADELAIDE SHARKS
HINDMARSH STADIUM	
14-MAY-00	SYDNEY OLYMPIC
BELMORE OVAL	

king STERGIBOY'S FOOTBALL KINGZ REPORT



Marcus Stergiopoulos is one of the Football Kingz' midfield lynchpins. 'Stergiboy' has been in New Zealand for three months since transferring from Carlton. Aidan Ormond spoke to him about the Kingz pre-season preparations and found out about Bill Clinton and Xena the Warrior Princess!

Marcus, you've been in NZ since July. How have you settled in to a new club, new country etc.?

Well my girlfriend, Janine and I went to Thailand for one month in the off-season, so when I got here I was still in holiday mode. After a few days I caught the Sydney bug and was bed ridden for three days which wasn't good as I had a lot to do before Janine got here and before training started.

But after a while I finally got things sorted out, house, car etc.

How are the Kingz shaping up? Are they organised off the pitch, and what is the squad like?

You should always expect teething problems when you go to a brand new club, that's life. And as you know the Kingz only got FIFA approval 10 weeks ago, so that has put us behind the eight-ball both on and off the field.

Our official training didn't start until August 23 as many Kingz players were NZ national players competing in Mexico for the Confederations Cup. So compared to other A-League clubs our preparation for Oct 1 hasn't been the way Wynton would of liked, but that was out of our hands.

But having said that if we aren't ready when we take on Carlton in front of 20-25 thousand screaming Kiwi people, we'll never be ready then ... and remember this, when teams come to the castle of KINGZ be ready for WAR!

How does the club differ from, say, some of your former clubs, like Carlton, Bradford or Gippsland Falcons?

They are all different in their own way, but what I noticed was that Kingz want to make sure that the players' wives and girlfriends are happy.

The reason behind this is, if the players' partners are happy, well so will the players and that means having a clear mind for football and playing well.

It's something that Wynton has introduced to the club from his experience in Europe, he said that the players' wives and girlfriends were looked after sometimes better than the players themselves in Germany.

What is the official name of the club? We thought it was Auckland Kingz?

Its official name is the Football Kingz, and the reason for Football and not Auckland is from a marketing point of view. We are based in Auckland but we want to target the whole of NZ, as this is their team and not just for the people of Auckland.

What is it like having Wynton Rufer coach you? Where do you think the team will finish in the league?

I don't think people back in Australia know how big a name Wynton Rufer is in European football. For me just to know the guy is an honour, and on top of that to have him coach me is an even bigger thrill.

He has a very smart footballing brain and his training sessions are very good, not only that he still can run rings around us in training.

As a player for the Kingz I have the best of both worlds - I have Wynton as a coach, and a player, so if you can't learn anything from this guy you should get two nails and bang them into the wall and hang up your boots and call it quits!

I think for our inaugural season a top ten finish would be classified as a good season, we certainly will not repeat the great performance of Carlton in their 1997/98 inaugural season, which I was a part of.

What has been the reaction of the NZ public to the team? Is it getting much publicity?

There is a big buzz around Auckland at the moment, people can't wait to see NZ's first ever professional club in action on Oct 1. Even in our pre-season friendlies around the country we have had pretty good support, they are also getting to know more and more about the Kingz players, especially the one with the funny surname, ME!

Every single game home and away will be on mainstream TV, plus Pay TV, and throughout the week we will have our own tv program that just talks about soccer.

cer

The club is trying to not only lift our profile as players but the game of soccer in this country, as rugby is NZ's number one sport.

How have the pre-season games been? Has the team impressed?

Well we haven't lost any games if that's what you mean. The team is coming along pretty well, we still have a lot of trialist with us at the moment and other players yet to come in.

In our friendly games we would field four-six trialists, so it's hard to judge our team only because of that. But we have been very good in our games so I guess that's a good sign for us when the whole team is together.

Tell me about North Harbour stadium? Will you be playing any games in other parts of NZ?

North Harbour Stadium is the same design as the Sydney Football Stadium but on a smaller scale. The crowd is close to the players which would give you a great atmosphere, and Wynton says that it even gives him goose bumps when it's full.

And yes the club will try to play a couple of games maybe down in Wellington or Christchurch which from a marketing point of view is a good idea.

Off the park, has it been easy moving to another country? How has your girlfriend Janine settled in?

It's taken a bit of time for Janine to settle in, she's left a good job back home and her family and friends, so yes for Janine it's been hard. But it's a good test for both of us if we want to go to Europe, as this is the first time we both have lived together in another country.

When Janine first arrived it didn't stop raining for days and because I was at training all day every day, Janine got homesick very quick. But now Janine has made friends and started working ... we both call Auckland home for now.

Is there a good place to jetski nearby? What do you like to do in your spare time?

Well I have given my jetski to my brothers back home, but I have been told that there are some pretty good places around Auckland.

So once the summer is near I think I will buy another one as that's the best way for me to clear mind and to be free from any worries. And in my spare time I just like to hang out with my best friend, Janine!

Your mum is still in the Gippsland area. Is she coming across to see you and do you miss your family and friends?



It's going to be hard for both my mum and dad to come to NZ as they are very busy with the family business, but they are always good with surprises. My family and friends are a very important part of my life and culture.

I miss my two brothers Theo and Angelo as the three of us have such a good relationship, and not to have that here is hard. But I speak with my ex-team mates, Manny Gots of Gippsland Falcons and Dean Anastasiadis from Carlton all the time; they are great guys.

You've come a long way from your schooldays in Gippsland. What do you think the future holds and can you see yourself staying long-term in NZ?

For the moment I have signed a two year deal with the Football Kingz. I'm still chasing my dream, and that dream is to go to Europe and to also play for my country one day.

With a good season under my belt and with Wynton passing on his knowledge could be the right ingredient for success, only God knows. But for the moment I'm really enjoying my life and I believe that things will happen for a reason.

If Inside Soccer came to Auckland, where would King Stergiboy take us? Have you met Xena the Warrior Princess?

I would take you guys to Starbucks hoping that we might bump into Bill Clinton, again! Last week some of the players went to Starbucks and saw Bill Clinton. As for Xena, you mean has she meet the Prince Warrior Stergiboy YET?

Thanks Stergiboy, we look forward to catching up with you during the season.

Cheers, and all the best to Inside Soccer's readers in Australia.



slater sends out warning with classy display

By Mark Fisher

MATCH 1: GIPPSLAND VS THE MELBOURNE RAIDERS

Gippsland, the team that finished in fourth place (out of four), took on the Raiders before a gathering of about 350 people. In what was meant to be a non-contest, the Falcons were made to work hard for their 2-1 win.

The northern metro-based Raiders fielded some players from fellow state league clubs, including the likes of Green Gully and Altona, and almost managed to pull off an unlikely victory in the dying stages.

The Falcons applied early pressure, and were rewarded in the third minute when diminutive striker Juan Nilo latched headed in Doug Marcina's corner, to give his team a 1-0 lead.

He was well-supported by Brian MacNicol and the in-form Robbie Puca, whose tormenting runs down the flanks caused major headaches for defender Frank Tramonata (later substituted).

The only real chance the Raiders had in the first half was when former Knights triallist Martin Collins shot wide of the post at about the 31st minute mark.

The Falcons clearly dominated early, and would have gone into the break with a two-goal cushion if John Buhagiar's shot went in off the post in the 45th minute.

In the second half, the Raiders re-grouped. They began to get their midfield passing together.

Sash Markovski looked the liveliest, and with George Svigos' help three minutes into the half, he broke forward and banged home into the right corner of the net. The Raiders had equalised!

More problems seemed to then surface for Gippsland. Their pre-season looked to take a turn for the worse when an otherwise solid Puca received a red card for a professional foul on Markovski.

Yet, Gippsland held their nerve at the very end, and came away with the win, despite possessing only ten men on the park. The 18-yard box was where the decisive play unfolded.

The Falcons' Nilo earned his second goal for the match when he broke free from his marker. He then collected the loose ball, cleverly chipped it over defender Julian Zach's head, and then followed up with a neat strike past a diving Robert Sobol in goals.

Gippsland took the match 2-1 over the gallant underdogs, who themselves may yet be starters for a not-to-distant second division format.

For his stoic efforts in defence, John Gimaud was awarded as the Raider's best player. For Gippsland, their man-of-the-match was midfielder Will Hastie. Match referee Jim Ouliaris presided over the contest.

Despite the Falcons' lacklustre performances during the pre-season, they have at least now found a striker who can offer them some much-needed scoring ability.

Scorers:

Gippsland Falcons: Nilo (3", 90")
Melbourne Raiders (Select): Markovski S (54").

The final round of the Blue Ribbon Cup took place at the Veneto Club, Bulleen on Sunday. The Cup Final itself was without NSL Champions South Melbourne, who were instead coming to terms with the Oceania Club Championship and some testing conditions in Fiji. Even without the Lakesiders there, the finalé between Carlton and the Melbourne Knights indeed delivered plenty of action. Prior to the kickoff of that match, fans were treated to a surprisingly tough contest between Gippsland and a Melbourne Raiders Select team, who battled it out in an inconsequential curtain-raiser. Here is how the day's events unfolded ...

GIPPSLAND FALCONS:

Miotto, Fak, Marcina, Savage, Nilo, Buhagiar, Hastie, Robertson (Laurence 14"), Hutchinson, Puca, MacNicol (Valieri 14").



Carlton's central midfield, there was nothing they could do about Lupo Lapsansky's tenacity at the ball, his give-and-go work with Joe Tricarico and his through-ball passing to Blues strikers Alex Moreira and John Markovski.

Carlton had clearly lifted a notch since their previous encounter with the Knights the week before, as indicated by the increased level of intensity they displayed all over the park.

The Knights, to their credit, did diffuse a number of crosses delivered well into the box, but in the end relentless pressure secured Carlton a confidence-boosting victory barely two weeks out from the new season.

Both teams went into the game fielding full-strength lineups, with Joe Didulica's reappearance in goals for the Knights a proceeding talking point! Slater began proceedings by offloading to Lapsansky, who fired a loosener over the bar from about 20 yards out.

Later, in the 29th minute, that man Slater again set up another promising move, by neatly crossing to a goal-bound Moreira. Only Didulica's terrific leap to his left kept the scores level.

In the 30th minute, Carlton won a penalty after Ivan Jolic handled the ball just outside the box. Lapsansky took the shot — a rasping curler — which flew around the wall and into the right side of the net. Didulica's dive was in vain, for you couldn't fault the accuracy of the strike.

And so, Carlton took the lead thanks to a piece of 'trademark Lapsansky', which sent Carlton's fans into a bout of hysterics.

The Knights could have made a real game of it had playmaker Ante Kovacevic been allowed more room to move, but it was probably the very restriction of supply that forced him to apply a late tackle on Moreira.

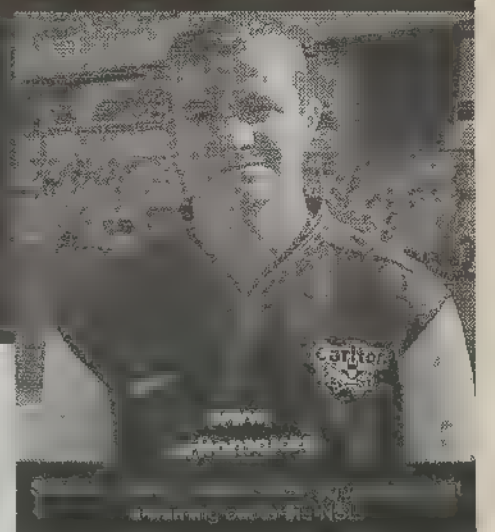
This indiscretion in the 42nd minute earned him a yellow card from Perry Mur, a referee notable for his restraint in such situations. He followed up with another yellow to Michael Reda just three minutes later.

Carlton had easily held sway by half-time, both in terms of discipline and in their application and commitment.

Knights coach Joe Biskic reached into his bag of tricks and made a double-substitution after the break. He brought on Hrvoje Matkovic and Zeljko Susa, and immediately the Knights looked fresher.

Michael Reda brought out a great save by Dean Anastasiadis in the 64th minute.

Meanwhile, who other than Slater



began to organise a few good build-ups at the other end of the field, with essential input again from Lapsansky and the Brazilian Moreira.

The Knights' new Nigerian stopper Murtala Abbas came on in the 67th minute, and looked hard to break down, which is understandable considering his height and determination in defence. He pulled off a tremendous sliding tackle to halt a determined goal-bound surge from Lapsansky.

Con Anthopoulos and Craig Deans were equally as solid at the back for the Blues, with a clearance off the line by Deans preserving Carlton's lead five minutes from time. Despite a number of late counterattacks by the never-say-die Knights, Carlton took the match before roughly 900 entertained spectators.

No clues for guessing who took out the man-of-the-match honours. For the record, Stuart Slater was named as the game's best player, and Lupo Lapsansky thoroughly deserved his award as the player of the tournament.

The Blue Ribbon Cup is now widely regarded as the premier pre-season competition involving all of Victoria's National Soccer League clubs. It has not only served up some entertaining football, but it also raised valuable funds for the Victorian community.

Scorers:

Carlton: Lapsansky (30").

CARLTON:

Anastasiadis, Anthopoulos, Deans, Douglas, Atkinson, Moreira, Markovski J, Lapsansky, Slater, Terminello, Tricarico

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS:

Didulica, Rahjer (Magdic 83"), Jolic (Abbas 67"), Kovacevic (Susa 46"), Vukadin, Vassallo, Silic (Matkovic 46"), Nasteviski, Kelic, Vargas, Reda

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POSITIVE SIGNS FOR WOLVES ON EVE OF NSL SEASON

By Steven Webb

Wollongong Wolves withstood a last minute Sydney Olympic resurgence to win the David Carty and Peter Forsyth Memorial Cup at Parramatta Stadium on Sunday. Wolves won 2-1 after going behind to a scrambled Gabriel Mendez goal in the 24th minute.

Olympic's keeper Jim Kourtis had to make a good save from man-of-the-match Esala Masi a few minutes later, but a typical driving shot from Noel Spencer on the edge of the area gave Wolves the equaliser in the 33rd minute.

The Wollongong team then put on the pressure. A Petrovski header on the end of a long ball from Souris forced another good save from Kourtis.

Masi headed over the bar and Spencer hoofed a shot wide after Kourtis cleared a Surjan corner.

Near the end of the first half Cardozo had a chance but shot straight to Beltrame.

Olympic started and ended the second half aggressively.

Marcus Phillips hit a free kick from outside the box, through the wall and into Beltrame's arms. Emerton (Olympic's



Play switched from to end but Wolves held out, even after Sasho Dimoski was sent off for presenting both feet to Marcus Phillips in the final minutes.

Wollongong now have the psychological edge South Melbourne didn't want them to have for the first serious game of the season.

Wollongong Wolves:

Daniel Beltrame, George Souris, Robert Stanton, Matthew Horsley, Antony Surjan (Paul Dimech 70), Scott Chipperfield, Neil Harlock, Noel Spencer (Paul Reid 85), Saso Petrovski (Sasho Dimoski 79), David Huxley, Esala Masi.

Sydney Olympic:

Jim Kourtis, Scott Baillie, Ante Junc, Brett Emerton, Chris Kalantzis, Scott Thomas, Marcus Phillips, Pablo Cardozo, Zlatko Arambasic (Adrian Cervinski 79), Gabriel Mendez (Peter Zorbas 70), Sebastian Sinozic (Nick Carle 64).

Paul Goodwin reports that Northern Spirit took the field for the earlier match with a side comprised mostly of fringe players and captained by Paul Bilokapic who has been regaining fitness slowly after injury.

Sunday's game was a low key affair really, with Marconi losing two players to red cards after taking an early lead and then being brought back to 1-1 by a well directed Bilokapic penalty.

The loss of first Darren McDonald, for an ugly looking two-footed tackle in the 18th minute and then ten minutes later Pan-Keun Kim for handling on the line, spoilt the game as a spectacle as Marconi became weary towards the end, while the youthful Spirit did not have the guile to outwit the experienced Marconi defence.

Marconi skipper Brad Maloney put his side a goal up inside 6 minutes when he accepted a delightful ball lifted over the heads of the Spirit defence by McDonald and then went on to chip the

advancing John Perosh

At the other end David Aceski, whose last game against Northern Spirit was the nightmare 4-0 loss at North Sydney Oval, laid his demons to rest with a superb save from a well stuck Adam Snyder drive, after the Spirit youngster had made a good run into the area in the 11th minute.

In the 18th Brendan Renaud provided a clever cross to the feet of Zeljko Babic whose low shot was well stopped by Perosh.

Moments later McDonald was dismissed by referee Simon Micallef for a rash tackle on Adam Griffiths, but the ten men soldiered on and almost doubled their lead in the 25th when Maloney hit a 35 yard free kick, that dipped late and forced Perosh to fingertip over the bar.

Simon Catanzaro burst into the Marconi area in the 28th and had a goalbound shot blocked by the keeper and when the rebound reached Griffiths, the blond-haired youngster's shot was stopped on the line by the outstretched hand of Kim, who was given his marching orders.

Griffiths had rifled the ball into the net at the second attempt before the referee pointed to the spot for the handball offence, but Bilokapic converted the penalty, so the sides were then level anyway.

The game deteriorated in the second period and apart from a couple of shots put wide by Catanzaro and Bilokapic there was little to excite the growing band of supporters assembling for the main game.

A tired Marconi were probably relieved to see the game go to penalties at the finish, but began the shoot-out poorly when new Italian import Paolo Marchesini tried to chip Perosh with a piece of fancy footwork, succeeding only in clearing the bar.

The penalty shoot out was looking better for Spirit when Catanzaro and Jack Sobczyk put away their side's first two attempts.



But Marconi's second-half keeper, Michael Turnbull, did his side proud by saving the remaining three Spirit kicks from Shane Lyons, Bilokapic and Elvis Olic, while Renaud, Dominic Longo and John Gibson were all on target, thus allowing the Marconi side to gain 3rd spot in the tournament with a 3-2 shoot-out success at the finish.

MARCONI: D Aceski (Turnbull 46), J Gibson, M Babic, B Renaud, D Longo, P K Kim, Zoric (P DiGia 46), D McDonald, Z Babic (P Marchesini 59), B Maloney (C), Trajanovski (C Care 46)

NORTHERN SPIRIT: J Perosh, D Culina, P Wearne (E Olic 88), J Sobczyk, A Griffiths, R Griffiths, S Lyons, P Bilokapic(C), A Snyder, T Faria (M Prentice 70), S Catanzaro

Hamilton does a South Melb!

Meanwhile in the NNSW Grand Final Hamilton Olympic collected back to back finals series victories at Breakers Stadium with a 4-0 win over Adamstown Rosebuds.

The first half was a real arm wrestle with Adamstown having several early chances but the ever safe Craig Harris protecting his goal.

At the opposite end Adamstown 'keeper Geoff Callinan was also safe when peppered with shots from Ben Lane and Corey Filipcevic with the score nil all at half-time.

Lane, the Dave Williams Medal winner, scoring 43 seconds after the break with a left foot strike past Callinan at the near post.

Adamstown retiring player/coach Neil Owens received yellow cards in the 53rd and 54th minutes to end an illustrious career on the sideline.

From there Olympic took control of the match with Filipcevic (61 and 75 minutes) and Lane (71 minute) scoring splendid goals to capture the Grand Final trophy.

'Adamstown showed a lot of charac-

ter (with ten men) and they battled until the end and they're all still young and have a very big future,' Ben Lane said of the Adamstown Rosebuds side.

'That was a great performance to win four nil.'

Adamstown player coach Neil Owens will hang up the boots but intends to continue coaching and bringing along the players at Adamstown, instilling in them the pride to play for one of the most traditional clubs in the area.

'The character and pride in some of the young guys is fantastic and that is the main ingredient I try to put into them is to have pride in their performance and they have done that this season,' Owens said.

First grade: Hamilton Olympic 4 (Ben Lane 46m, 71m; Corey Filipcevic 61m, 75m) beat Adamstown Rosebuds 0.

Reserve grade: Edgeworth Eagles 1 (Gavin Ward 10m Pen) beat Weatherex Gunners 0.

Under-18's: Adamstown Rosebuds 2 (Steve Atchinson 18m, 25m) 3 penalties beat Broadmeadow Magic 2 (Peter Becklar 1m, 4m) 1 penalties.

Dave Williams Medal: Ben Lane.



player of the match) had a good run at goal but shot wide.

At the other end Spencer mis-kicked a chance from a Horsley cross and soon after shot over the bar when Juric cleared another Surjan corner.

Wolves' second goal came in the 58th minute when Chipperfield completed a great run through Olympic's midfield by chipping the keeper.

Olympic responded with a good run by Cardozo who was stopped by Souris.

But he was soon on the end of a Kalantzis pass and shooting another into Beltrame's safe hands.

Still on the attack, Olympic put a free kick over the bar, missed a header and saw Beltrame take another simple catch.

JIMMY HAYES CALLS IT A DAY AFTER 45 YEARS

Jimmy Hayes, a Canberra soccer icon for forty-five years recently announced his retirement from the game that has been such an important part of his life.

Jimmy originally came to Australia from England in 1955 after playing in the leading amateur leagues around London. As a merchant seaman, Jimmy had played soccer around the globe in places such as Canada, Africa, Hong Kong, Iceland and Yugoslavia.

After arriving in Australia, Jim captained the ACT Senior Representative team in 1955. His long coaching career began the following year with Hollandia where he was captain/coach for four years.

Around this time Jim helped coach the first junior team in Canberra known as the Ainslie Rovers. This group of children were youngsters drawn from the Ainslie Hostel who could do nothing but train as they had no opposition to play against. Jim continued to play socially for the next ten years while his coaching of juniors and representative teams continued to develop. In the mid eighties Jim got back into senior club coaching with Olympic and Belconnen winning Ampol and Federation Cups.

In 1991 Jim became the ACT Director of Coaching, a position he held until 1997 when he joined the Belwest Soccer Club. Over the years Jim has coached tens of thousands of young Canberra boys and girls, men and women, many of whom have gone on to higher honours.

Jimmy's coaching ethos was based on respect and giving players confidence. In an interview with Inside Soccer Hayes said: "If you can show players that you know what you are talking about and you give them respect they will respect you, but it takes time."

Amongst the thousands he has coached Hayes believes that the best two players that he has seen are Ned Zelic and Zeljko Susic.

Since 1997 Jim has undertaken an even wider range of coaching assignments as the Belwest Technical Director of Coaching. As well as coaching the Belwest women's senior team, he also coached the junior boys and girls teams and carried out coaching clinics in many schools in the West Belconnen area. He also directed Belwest's Novel Coaching Academy over the past two off seasons.

Belwest Soccer Club President, Alan Lee, said that Jim's retirement leaves a very large hole in the soccer fabric of Canberra.

"Jimmy was not only a great coach to thousands in past years, he was also a great friend and mentor to many of us in today's soccer community," said Lee.

"Jimmy has the ability to not only impart knowledge and skill but also to inspire. Our sport will be the poorer for his retirement."



Jimmy Hayes, on the right, with Paul Wade and other players on the field.

MONARO RAIN ON SUN'S PARADE

A solitary goal to midfielder Darryl North gave Monaro an upset 1-0 victory over the minor premiers Capital City Suns in the grand final of the ACT Premier League at Greenway Oval on Sunday.

The Suns were looking to cap off a wonderful year - in only their second season in Canberra's top flight - by adding the grand final trophy to their championship silverware, but found Monaro to be in fighting form.

The Queanbeyan-based side has been somewhat of a nemesis team for the Suns this year, and served notice of their intentions with a convincing 3-1 victory when the two sides last met three weeks ago.

The Suns dominated the first half of the match however, and could easily have been two or three goals ahead at the break but for a sterling performance from Monaro goalkeeper Ian Jefferies.

The custodian needed to be at full stretch to knock down a long-range strike from Pat Phommaseisy in the 23rd minute. Ten minutes later he managed to smother a first-time effort from Suns' danger-man Tony Lemezina, before repeating the effort against Phommaseisy just before the break.

Monaro coach Andrew Monterosso later lavished praise upon Jefferies' performance. "Ian Jefferies just kept us in the game - he's a fantastic keeper," Monterosso said. "We had a good chat at half-time, and said 'we're still in the game, Ian's kept us in the game, let's go out and finish it'."

The coach's words eventually had the desired effect, but only after the Suns had almost snatched the lead with a great opportunity seven minutes into the second half.

Luka Ujdur's curling left-foot free-kick seemed destined for the far corner of the net, but rebounded off the upright back into the path of Phommaseisy who, faced with an open goal and Jefferies sprawled upon the ground, inexplicably sent the ball over

the crossbar.

Monaro dominated the match thereafter, and eventually took the lead in the 66th minute when Giannasca batted Jimmy Baxter's low piledriver into the path of North, who calmly slotted the ball home for the winner.

Suns' coach Ian Shaw refused to let one loss dampen an otherwise excellent season. "I think possibly we could have got a couple of goals in, but they stood fast and they deserved the goal they got," he said. "I was very happy with the team's performance. Individually the players have done a fantastic job for the Suns."

In earlier games, Belconnen United had a day they would sooner forget, narrowly losing both the Youth and under-23 grand finals, while Tuggeranong United swamped O'Connor Knights 6-1 in the Premier League 2 grand final on Saturday.

ACT PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS

Premier League 1

1st Grade
Monaro 1 (North 66m)
Capital City Suns 0

Under-23
University of Canberra 2 (McDermott 6m, Parkin 58m)
Belconnen United 1 (Rupit 91m).

Youth
Gungahlin Juventus 4 (Cattanach 41m, Valeri 65m, Guzman 70m, 72m)
Belconnen United 4 (Haraziti 24m, Maan 25m, Pietrukowski 38m, 94m).
Juventus won 4-3 on penalties.

Premier League 2

1st Grade
Tuggeranong United 6
O'Connor Knights 1

Reserves
Tuggeranong United 2
O'Connor Knights 1

Masters
Canberra City 1 (Hogg)
Canberra Deakin 0

NSW SUPER YOUTH LEAGUE

Super Youth League Grand Finals

G13 - The Blacktown City Demons and the Wollongong Wolves, the top two teams in the league, clashed in the G13 Grand Final.

The Demons went through the season unbeaten and were therefore red-hot favourites against the Wolves, and they proved they deserved that tag by taking the Grand Final 2-0.

G14 - It was a similar story in the G14 Grand Final, where the top two teams played in Sydney Olympic and the Gladesville Hornsby Association. Olympic finished thirteen points clear at the top of the table, and they took the Grand Final out with a 4-2 win over the gallant Association

side.

G15 - Things had been much tighter in the G15 competition all year, so when the league winners Blacktown City played a Marconi Fairfield side that had finished just three points behind them the Grand Final was always going to be a tough one to pick. So it proved, with the Marconi Fairfield side taking the trophy with a fine 2-0 win.

G16 - Blacktown City went into the G16 Grand Final as definite underdogs against a Sydney Olympic side that had finished some seventeen points above them, but it took extra time to resolve this one.

It finished 1-1 at the end of normal time, but it was the Demons who surprised

their opponents with that important goal to take the trophy with a 2-1 win.

Grand Final Winners:

G13 Blacktown City Demons
G14 Sydney Olympic
G15 Marconi Fairfield
G16 Blacktown City Demons

Cadet League Grand Finals

Division One

G11 - Second played fourth in the G11 Cadet League Division One Grand Final, and it was the team who finished second who took the honours. Sydney United and Marconi Fairfield finished 0-0 at the end of normal time, but Sydney United knocked in the winner in extra time to take the match 1-0.

G12 - The G12 Grand Final belonged to the Parramatta Eagles, and they came away with the trophy after defeating Marconi Fairfield 2-1.

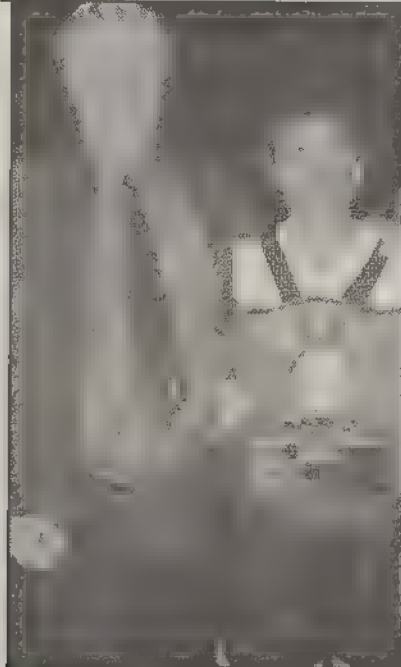
Grand Final Winners:

G11 Sydney United
G12 Parramatta Eagles

INSIDE JUNIOR SOCCER

Ram

BILL TURNER CUP



The culmination of the twenty-first Bill Turner Cup took place last week at the Edgeworth Soccer Ground. Figtree High School from Wollongong is the 1999 champions after defeating ASC St Peters of Maitland 4-1.

Due to the inclement weather of the previous day both the semi-finals and final was played on the Wednesday. At the end of the final Figtree was a deserved, and tired, winner for the first time in the history of the Cup.

The growth of the Bill Turner Cup from a modest 34 Hunter Valley schools in 1979 to a peak of 738 schools in 1998 has been a great achievement.

Following Wednesday's final well over 500 fixtures have been determined in the 1999 series, a mammoth achievement. To organise an event of this magnitude requires a great deal of time and effort from a large number of dedicated volunteers who have provided both unstintingly and who deserve the utmost gratitude.

Photographs: From left anti clockwise:

1. Figtree captain Daniel Ratajkovski is presented the Bill Turner Cup by Pastor George W. Drinkall, Chairman of the NSW Drug Awareness Council.
2. Newcastle Breakers owner David Hall with Martin Henry, captain of ASC St Peters.
3. Bill Turner holding aloft his award to commemorate 21 years of the Bill Turner Cup.
4. Figtree players taking turns to feel the silverware.



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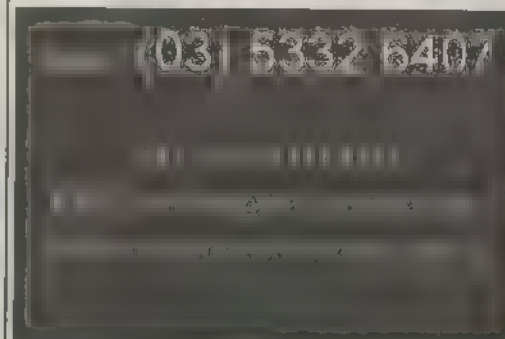
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ITALIAN GOAL ORGY



Lee Bowyer celebrates his goal.

AS Roma rampaged to a 7-0 home victory on a miserable night for Portuguese soccer on Thursday as the first round of the UEFA Cup kicked off with plenty of goals and more clubs than ever.

Roma, under the expert guidance of AC Milan's former European Cup-winning coach Fabio Capello, thrashed Portugal's Vitoria Setubal on a night that provided few upsets but a headache for defending champions Parma.

Once-great Benfica, European champions in 1961 and 1962, compounded the Portuguese misery by losing 1-0 at home to Romania's Dinamo Bucharest.

Former European champions Juventus and Ajax Amsterdam swept their lowly rivals aside in convincing fashion. But Roma, the first Italian club to win the Fairs Cup precursor to the UEFA Cup in 1961, were the highest scorers along with PAOK Thessaloniki, who won away at Georgia's Lokomotiv Tbilisi 7-0.

Roma's Russian midfielder Dmitry Alenichev, who said two weeks ago that he did not think he had a future at the Italian club because Capello favoured Italian Francesco Totti, was inspirational and scored a hat-trick. Totti had been suspended for the match.

Parma, reluctantly returning to the second-tier competition after being eliminated from the Champions League qualifiers, had to come from behind to beat little-known Ukrainians Kryvbas Kryviy Rih 3-2 in Italy.

The two vital away goals for the well-organized and effective Ukrainians mean that a poor-looking Parma, without a win in Serie A this season, now have a tough fight on their hands to progress in the away leg.

The Italians were lucky not to be seriously embarrassed on a rainy night in the Tardini stadium after the Ukrainians pushed for an equaliser and twice forced goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon to make diving saves in the final stages.

Kryvbas striker Olexandr Palyantza stunned Parma with a well-taken goal after just five minutes but two goals from Marco Di Vaio put Parma back in control by the 20th minute.

A Dino Baggio header made it 3-1 in the 67th minute but substitute Roman Monaryov pulled one back in the 74th after just two minutes on the field.

Juventus, Europe's top side in 1996 who were forced to qualify through the Intertoto Cup this

season, were 4-0 up after the opening 24 minutes but then went off the boil.

It was left to Italian international striker Alessandro del Piero, easing back into the limelight after 10 months on the sidelines, to come on as a second-half substitute and score the fifth eight minutes from time.

Ajax, the side that beat Juventus for the 1995 European Cup, rolled past Slovakia's Dukla Banska Bystrica 6-1 - with the Slovak side taking the early lead through an own goal.

Frank Verlaat was the culprit in the 14th minute but then amends by equalising with a 25th minute penalty.

Martijn Reuser made it 2-1 a minute later and then the floodgates opened in the second half.

Striker Filippo Inzaghi claimed two goals on Thursday as Juventus crushed Cypriot hosts Omonia Nicosia 5-2 in their UEFA Cup first round, first leg encounter.

The Italians, European champions in 1996 and looking to lift the UEFA trophy for the fourth time, eased off after going 4-0 up after 24 minutes.

Inzaghi opened his account from close range after two minutes and added a second 15 minutes later.

A header from Darko Kovacevic made it 3-0 before Juan Esnaider killed off the game with a free-kick, allowing the visitors to sit back and resort to possession football.

Omonia's first chances came in the second half but both were wasted by German striker Rainer Rauffmann.

Omonia coach Dusan Gallis, however, gave the 16,000 home fans something to cheer by bringing on Lefteris Kondolefteros with 17 minutes remaining.

He scored twice, sandwiching an 82nd-minute strike by Juventus forward Alessandro Del Piero, who was brought on for the second half to continue his rehabilitation following injury.

George Graham's warning to beware of the unknown proved to be a little over cautious as Spurs built a three-goal cushion to take into the second leg of their UEFA Cup game against their Moldovan opponents.

The Tottenham manager had promised his team would pay due respect to the Moldovan part-timers who narrowly missed out on a place in the European Champions' League this season.

But goals from Oyvind Leonhardsen and Chris Perry inside the first 31 minutes, and another from skipper Tim Sherwood 11 minutes after the break, ensured the second leg in Chisinau in a fortnight should be a formality.

West Ham returned to top-level European football for the first time in more than 18 years with a bang.

The happy Hammers gave their fans a Euro treat at Upton Park as they swept aside Osijek of Croatia 3-0 in the UEFA Cup first round, first leg.

Goals from Paulo

Wanchope, Paolo Di Canio and Frank Lampard gave Harry Redknapp's men a nice cushion to take to Eastern Europe in a fortnight.

Osijek's recent European experience may be far greater than West Ham's but only a Balkan nightmare will stop the Premiership club progressing to the second round.

Wanchope tapped in a simple opener just before half-time for the Intertoto qualifiers, Osijek's goalkeeper Mario Galinovic gifted Di Canio the second moments after the restart and Lampard crashed in the third as the Hammers cruised home.

Henrik Larsson showed his immense value to Celtic with a typically cool double as the Glasgow club beat Hapoel Tel Aviv 2-0 at Parkhead.

The Swede expertly crafted a 24th minute opening strike then carved a further imprint on this UEFA Cup first round first-leg tie with a 50th minute penalty.

It was a match in which Celtic may well have scored more with more decisive finishing but on the night Larsson's colleagues were unable to match his composure in front of goal.

Tel Aviv were always a threat on the break and Celtic head coach John Barnes will know the second leg in Israel will be no formality.

Larsson's opener deflated Tel Aviv who had survived a period of early pressure and even after the penalty won by Stephane Mahe the game was never over as a contest.

Mark Viduka was again absent through a knee injury meaning Mark Burchill retained his place.

Leeds midfielder Lee Bowyer fired a deadly double to virtually guarantee boss David O'Leary's side a place in the second round of the UEFA Cup.

Bowyer's brilliant brace sandwiched a goal from skipper Lucas Radebe, which are about as rare as a UEFA Cup tie being played in a neutral venue.

And that was exactly the scenario as Leeds head into the second leg of their first-round tie following a 3-1 win against Partizan Belgrade in the Dutch town of Heerenveen.

While Bowyer may grab the headlines and goalkeeper Nigel Martyn went from villain to hero in the space of nine first-half minutes, it was Radebe's bizarre 39th-minute strike which was the main talking point.

It was only the South African international's second in a United shirt since joining the club five years ago and his first since breaking his duck in an FA Cup third-round tie in early January 1998.

He slipped on the floor as he attempted to get on the end of Jonathon Woodgate's flick-on from a Harte free-kick.

But as the ball came down the prone Radebe hooked his shot into the roof of the net.

Bodo/Glimt	0-5	Werder Bremen Pezzer (12, 76) Bogdanovic (43, 54) Maksimov (69)
Hadjuk Spirt Zenit St Petersburg	0-0 0-3	Levski Sofia Bologna Ventola (39) Signori (58, 90pen)
Skonto Riga Astafjevs (32) Maccabi Tel-Aviv Koubka (44) Ded Ben-Dayan (84)	1-0 2-2	Widzew Lodz RC Lens Sakho (32) Job (54)
Gorica	0-1	Panathinaikos Liberopoulos (13)
Lokomotiv Tbilisi	0-7	PAOK Salonika Goergads (15, 23) Sabri (42) Fotusos (56, 62) Maragos (66) Frateskos (67)
Sigma Olomouc Kobynik (63)	1-3	Real Mallorca Engonga (12) Tristan (53) Sjankovic (76)
Torpedo Kutaisi	0-1	AEK Athens Zikos (90)
Parma Di Vaio (15, 20) Baggio (67) Monarov (72) CSKA Sofia	3-2 0-2	Kryvbas Kryviy Rih Palyantza (5)
Anderlecht Barektarevic (20og) Radzinsk (35, 67) FC Zurich Jamarau (30) Viking FK Svensson (57) Berne (70) Espevor (78pen)	3-1 1-0 3-0	Newcastle United Solano (52) Ketsbaia (77) Olimpija Ljubljana
Hapoel Haifa Turjeman (18, 32) Siv (45) Lausanne-Sports Mazzoni (21, 58) Kuzba (20) Ajax Verlaat (25pen) Reuser (26) Knopfer (48) Machas (50, 84) Wamberto (72) AB Copenhagen	3-1 3-2 6-1 0-2	Club Bruges Jankauskas (66)
Beira Mar Fary (41)	1-2	Celta de Vigo Revivo (62) Karpin (67) Dukla Banska Bystrica Frank Verlaat (14og)
Grazer AK Akwuegbu (12, 56) Adu Tutu (34) Ionikos Diminadis (90)	1-3	Grasshoppers Zurich Yak (50) Ekoku (81)
Kaiserslautern Koch (29) Djorkaeff (37) Marschall (39) AS Monaco Simone (68, 90) Trezeguet (72) Celtic Larsson (24, 50pen) Amica Wronki Dawidowski (26) Bosacki (70) Aris Salonika Matzos (12pen) Omonia FC Kondolefteros (75, 86)	3-0 2-0 2-0 1-1 2-5	Vitesse Arnhem Van Hooydonk (50) Grozdit (82) 3-0 Spartak Trnava
Tottenham Hotspur Leonhardsen (3) Perry (32) Sherwood (56) West Ham United Wanchope (39) Di Canio (48) Lampard (58) Benfica Nastase (34) Atletico Madrid Gamarra (42) Hasebebank (45) Paunov (58) AS Roma Aldas (12) Montella (14) Ajechev (16, 53, 75) Assuncao (6-9, 40) Delvecchio (73) Crvena Zvezda	3-0 3-0 0-1 3-0 7-0	St Johnstone Hapoel Tel-Aviv Brondby Servette Telrov (88) Juventus Inzaghi (2, 17) Kovacevic (22) Esnaider (24) Del Piero (82) FC Zimbru Chisinau
Partizan Tomio (20)	1-3	NK Osijek
Udinese Sottil (9)	1-0	Dinamo Bucharest Ankaragucu Vitoria Setubal
		Montpellier Loko (6) Leeds Utd Bowyer (25, 83) Radebe (38) Aalborg

UNITED DRAW AT HOME AGAINST CROATIA

European champions Manchester United were held to a goalless draw by Croatia Zagreb in their opening Champions League match.

The result will hardly effect United's chances of progressing from Group D, but it should serve as a timely wake-up call for Sir Alex Ferguson's men.

To be fair to Ferguson he knew before this game that it would be a real test and he was forced into giving full European debuts to youngsters Michael Clegg and Mark Wilson.

However he still managed to field a formidable line-up, which included six of those who started on that never-to-be-forgotten night in the Nou Camp.

The Croatian champions more than held their own during a dull first half and Ardlies curtailed his natural attacking instincts and went with an unusual 3-6-1 formation.

Zagreb looked threatening on the break and Tomislav Rukavina should have done better when he could only connect weakly with Mario Cvitanovic's excellent through ball.

United just could not rouse themselves and Dwight Yorke summed up their first-half when he scuffed a shot from Ryan Giggs' cross wide of Ladic's near post.

United were getting closer and an off-balance Dwight Yorke hit the crossbar with an effort eight minutes from time.

Arsenal penalty king Kanu held his head in despair after his spot-kick bungle 12 minutes from time stopped Arsenal claiming a famous victory in their Champions League opener here against Fiorentina - and forced him to join a celebrity list of Arsenal wasters.

The towering Nigerian felt two inches tall as his tame effort was cradled in the smothering embrace of goalkeeper Francesco Toldo, who had been booked for bringing down Fredrik Ljungberg when the Swede looked certain to score from a Marc Overmars pass.



David Trezeguet

And as manager Arsene Wenger seethed in frustration despite a precious and well-earned point he must have been reflecting on just who he can trust to put away football's simplest of scoring opportunities in future.

Dennis Bergkamp suffered the agony of a penalty miss in the last minute of last season's FA Cup semi-final replay when Manchester United cashed-in on the way to their glorious Treble with a Ryan Giggs stunner in extra-time.

And new Croat star Davor Suker, whom Kanu replaced after an hour of this emotional battle in central Italy, blundered against Liverpool at Anfield three weeks ago when the injured Kanu was missing - having already converted two from the spot this term.

A point was a splendid result for the Gunners, who diligently checked the flow of Fiorentina's star-studded attack and counter-attacked brightly in a match in which both sides should have been awarded penalties even before Kanu's disaster.

Gianluca Vialli was a proud man as Chelsea matched AC Milan for quality in their Champions League opener at Stamford Bridge.

Gianfranco Zola came within inches of bagging a winner for Chelsea when he hit the post, though Milan almost stole victory when Brazilian star Leonardo struck the bar with five minutes remaining.

"I am very proud of my players because to play so well against a team like AC Milan is something to be proud of," said Vialli after the match finished goalless.

"We showed we can compete with everybody, we are good enough to be in the Champions League.

"It's not going to be easy, it's going to be difficult but we started quite well with one point."

Vialli was especially pleased with Chelsea's first-half display, when the Blues dominated the Italian giants.

"In the second half it was more difficult - we got tired and they played better," he said. "We had a few chances, we hit the post - but they hit the bar with five minutes to go.

"It is a shame we didn't score and obviously we regret that a little bit but in our first match I think we did very well.

Former Arsenal striker Nicolas Anelka put on another disappointing performance as Spanish international Raul scored a late equaliser to salvage a 3-3 draw for Real Madrid at Greek champions Olympiakos.

The seven-times kings of Europe opened their Champions' League campaign with £23-million striker Anelka on the bench, and fell behind in Athens when classy Brazilian Giovanni

bagged the opener after just 11 minutes.

But England winger Steve McManaman inspired Real's fightback, his cross headed home in the 24th minute by Savio before Roberto Carlos put the Group E visitors 2-1 ahead from a free-kick.

Real coach John Toshack brought Anelka off the bench shortly after the break.

But the substitution did not have the required effect as the misfiring Frenchman again failed to justify his price tag in his 35-minute run-out.

Instead it was the Greek side, who bowed out of this competition to Juventus at the quarter-final stage last season, who scored next when Giovanni smacked home a low effort at the second attempt.

Slovenian international Zlatko Zahovic added the third in the 67th minute to spark celebrations among the home supporters - although McManaman nearly equalised when he hit the post from the edge of the box.

Instead it was left to Roberto Carlos to make the decisive push forward, scurrying down the left to set up Raul who bundled the ball over the line.

Portugal's FC Porto top Real's Group E after an 89th-minute goal from Deco was enough to see off Molde of Norway.

Last season's runners-up Bayern Munich made a good start in Group F with a 2-1 home victory over Holland's PSV Eindhoven.

Bayern, who play Rangers tonight, quickly showed they were over their traumatic defeat in last season's final by Manchester United when summer signing Paulo Sergio put them 1-0 ahead after 11 minutes.

After 59 minutes a chip from PSV's Russian international Dmitri Khokhlov, set up by Belgian Luc Nills, squared the match only for Carsten Jancker to create what proved the winner after 69 minutes, again for Paulo Sergio.

The other German side in action last week, Hertha Berlin, made a superb start early on in Chelsea's Group H at Turkish side Galatasaray.

Goals from German international striker Michael Preetz and Dariusz Wosz gave Hertha a 2-0 lead within 13 minutes and silenced the usually noisy home fans.

Hakan Sukur pulled one back after 24 minutes but Hertha looked like hanging on only for veteran Romanian midfielder Georghe Hagi to give the match another twist, equalising in the 86th minute to ensure a 2-2 draw.

In Group G, Andrei Tikhonov scored a hat-trick as Spartak Moscow ran out 3-1 winners at Willem II and French champions Bordeaux drew 0-0 at Sparta Prague.



Barcelona's Abelardo ... scorer of a late goal.

CHAMPIONS CUP RESULTS

Group A:		
Bayer Lever	1 - 1	Lazio
Oliver Neuville (14)		Sinisa Mihajlovic (18)
Dynamo Kiev	0 - 1	NK Maribor
Ante Simundza (73)		
Group B:		
Fiorentina	0 - 0	Arsenal
AIK Solna	1 - 2	Barcelona
N. Novakovic (72)		Abelardo (86)
		Dani (90)
Group C:		
Boavista	0 - 3	Rosenborg
		JD Sorensen (10)
		Orjan Berg (33)
		Roar Strand (73)
Feyenoord	1 - 1	Borussia Dortmund
K Van Wonderen (67)		Fredi Bobic (71)
Group D:		
Manchester U.	0 - 0	Croatia Zagreb
Marseilles	2 - 0	Sturm Graz
Robert Pires (9)		
Fabrizio Ravanelli (33)		
Group E:		
Molde	0 - 1	Porto
Deco (89)		
Olympiakos	3 - 3	Real Madrid
Giovanni (11, 64)		Savio (24)
Zahovic (67)		Roberto Carlos (32)
		Raul (80)
Group F:		
Bayern Munich	2 - 1	PSV Eindhoven
Sergio (11, 69)		Khokhlov (59)
Valencia	2 - 0	Rangers
Gonzalez (57, 74)		
Group G:		
Sparta Prague	0 - 0	Bordeaux
Willem II	1 - 3	Spartak Moscow
Arts (56)		Tikhonov (27, 37, 53)
Group H:		
Chelsea	0 - 0	AC Milan
Galatasaray	2 - 2	Hertha Berlin
Sukur (24)		Preetz (12)
Hagi (86, pen)		Wosz (13)

SHEARER BACK ON TRACK WITH FIVE

Chelsea crashed to their first defeat of the season as Watford made the most of a disappointing day for the Premiership's Champions League contenders.

Only Arsenal emerged with any credit after they scraped to a 1-0 win at struggling Southampton, with Chelsea beaten by an Allan Smart goal at Vicarage Road and Manchester United needing a late Jordi Cruyff equaliser at home to Wimbledon.

Club record signing Nordin Wooter, a £950,000 purchase from Real Zaragoza, made his debut for Watford but it was one of the bargain-basement heroes of their play-off win who upset Gianluca Vialli's millionaires.

Smart scored against Bolton at Wembley to seal the Hornets' promotion and his first goal of the season had Vicarage Road rocking - it was only the third time Chelsea's rearguard have been breached this season.

Chelsea's Italian debut boy Gabriele Ambrosetti gave the ball away needlessly and Watford swept forward midway through the second half.

Wooter found Paul Robinson who switched the ball back to Smart and the striker drilled home a 16-yard shot into the Chelsea net to make amends for his earlier miss.

It meant another priceless scalp for wily old Watford boss Graham Taylor whose side, among the pre-season favourites for the drop, also won by the same margin at Liverpool.

It looked like being a Badir day at the office for Manchester United until substitute Jordi Cruyff saved the champions' blushes at Old Trafford.

Israeli international Walid Badir, a £1million early-season buy from Hapoel Petah Tikva, scored his first goal for the Dons with United turning in a distinctly unimpressive first-half performance.

England under-21 striker Carl Cort skipped through the United defence in the 16th minute and laid the ball on for the Israeli international to score.

It made Sir Alex Ferguson's decision to rest David Beckham, suffering a slight hamstring strain after the disappointing goalless Champions League draw against Croatia Zagreb, look like a costly decision.

There was more bad news for United when it was confirmed that Ryan Giggs' hamstring injury, which forced him off in the first half, will also rule him out of next week's Champions League game against Sturm Graz in Austria.

But his replacement levelled matters with 16 minutes remaining when he rounded Dons keeper Neil Sullivan to equalise.

Unfortunately for out-of-sorts Manchester United and Chelsea, fellow title challengers Arsenal managed to bounce back from their midweek exertions with a 1-0 win at The Dell.

The Gunners had to rely on their stand-in keeper Alex Manninger for a string of fine saves during the first half as

Southampton went in search of a prize scalp.

But Thierry Henry relieved the pressure with his first league goal for the Gunners as Arsene Wenger's side bounced back in the second half.

Michael Owen, back in action after his long lay-off with a hamstring injury, scored twice on his return to Liverpool's starting XI in the 2-2 draw at Filbert Street.

But the game was overshadowed by two more red cards dished out by controversial referee Uriah Rennie.

Tony Cottee had given Leicester a second-minute lead to help the Foxes fans temporarily forget about their problems off the field.

It was the ideal start for manager Martin O'Neill, who announced he would be staying despite boardroom quarrels at the club.

But Owen soon had Liverpool back on level terms. Gerry Taggart scythed down Patrik Berger in the penalty area and Owen, in for Robbie Fowler after his team-mate picked up an ankle injury in training, tucked home the penalty.

Camara was in focus again soon afterwards when his run and cross set up Owen for his second, the striker sidefooting into an empty net.

Rennie left the field to a loud chorus of boos from the home supporters at half-time after he disallowed a goal from Emile Heskey.

And the official, who sent off Alan Shearer on the opening day of the season, brandished red card again when Frank Sinclair brought down Camara shortly into the second half before Izzet equalised late on.

Liverpool midfielder David Thompson also saw red for a late challenge in the dying minutes of the game.

Kevin Phillips hit a hat-trick as Sunderland cruised to a stunning 5-0 win at Derby.

Peter Reid made 10 changes from the side that beat Walsall 3-2 in the Worthington Cup in midweek and they were 2-0 up at the break thanks to goals from Gavin McCann and Phillips.

Phillips latched onto Michael Gray's cross to increase Sunderland's lead shortly after the interval and a Derby fan was arrested for running on the pitch in protest after Niall Quinn made it four.

Phillips made it goal number eight for the season so far when he completed the rout late on.

Dion Dublin scored his fifth goal of the season as Aston Villa made a meal of beating Bradford 1-0 in the Midlands.

John Gregory's men needed the second-half introduction of teenage striker Darius Vassell to get their matchwinner, the substitute setting up Dublin from close-range.

Alan Shearer announced his return to top form with a brilliant five-goal blast as Newcastle crushed Sheffield Wednesday 8-0 at St James' Park.

Shearer struck on 31, 33, 42, 81 and 85 minutes - two from

the penalty spot - after Aaron Hughes had set the ball rolling, with the excellent Kieron Dyer and Gary Speed also chipping in.

The Magpies ended a run of 14 Premiership games without a win in the most emphatic style.

It was Wednesday though that had all the early pressure and were very unlucky to find themselves a goal down after 10 minutes when Hughes headed the hosts in front.

The gloom deepened for Danny Wilson's men as Shearer converted Nolberto Solano's cross and just two minutes later the referee awarded a penalty.

Warren Barton's hopeful ball in ricocheted off the hand of Emerson Thorne who was stood in the box and Shearer made no mistake with the spot kick.

Shearer completed his hat-trick when Dyer surged down the wing and crossed for the England captain to stretch out at the far post and score.

The second half continued in much the same vein with Newcastle looking like they will score with every attack.

When it came, the fifth was something of a farce after Kevin Pressman fumbled, Shearer pounced, Pressman couldn't get enough on the save and Dyer tapped the ball in for a richly deserved goal.

Wednesday to their credit refused to give up and despite the hopeless scoreline battled away, but to no avail.

Speed got the sixth with his head from another Solano corner.

Shearer got back into the act after Solano delivered a free kick that Pressman flapped at.

Soon after, Paul Robinson was tripped in the corner of the penalty area and Shearer confidently scored his fifth goal of the match.

Spurs condemned Coventry to their fifth defeat of the season but made amazingly hard work of their 3-2 victory.

The Sky Blues went three goals down and were looking sunk before they pulled one back via the irrepressible Robbie Keane who turned and shot to continue his impressive start in the Premiership.

The Moroccan international Youssuff Chippo scored his second goal for Coventry to set up an exciting finale.

Tottenham got off to a great start when Steffen Iversen bagged his third goal of the season just minutes into the game.

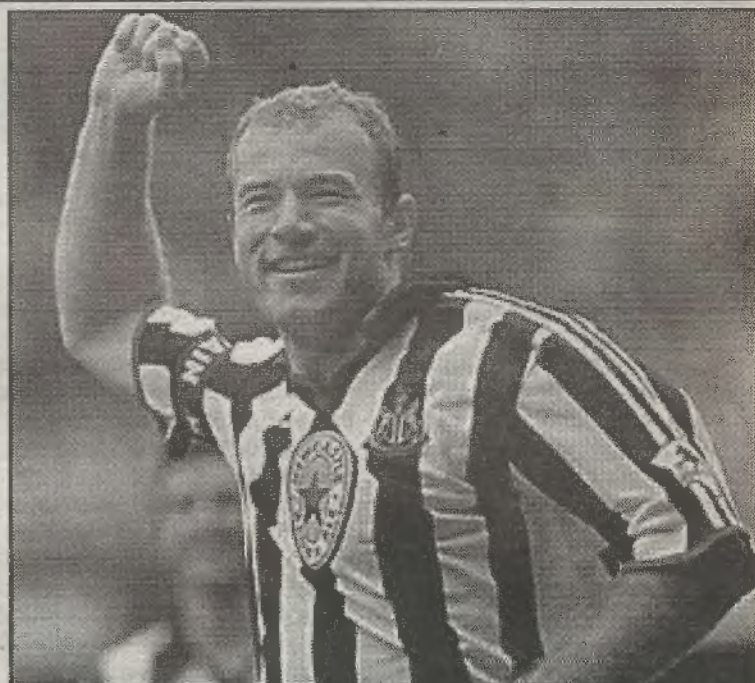
The Norwegian latched on to a pass from Mauricio Tarricco to give his side an early lead.

And there it stayed until the second half when Spurs netted two in two minutes.

Chris Armstrong shot on the turn in the box from David Ginola's corner swiftly followed by Oyvind Leonhardson's drive.

Australian international Harry Kewell finally ended his 18-match goal drought as Leeds United beat Middlesbrough 2-0 at Elland Road.

It was Leeds' third successive top flight victory and lifts manager David O'Leary's side to second in the table.



Alan Shearer ... answered his critics with five goals

PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS

Aston Villa 1 Dublin 71 Derby 0	Bradford 0	Everton 1 Jeffers 64	West Ham 0
Leicester 2 Cottee 2	Sunderland 5 McCann 24 Phillips 42, 52, 85 Quinn 55	Leeds 2 Bridges 14 Kewell 64	M'brough 0
Izzet 86 Man Utd 1 Cruyff 73	Liverpool 2 Owen Pen 23, 29	Newcastle 8 Hughes (11) Shearer (30pen, 33, 41, 80pen 84) Dyer (46) Speed (77)	Sheff Wed 0
Southampton 0	Wimbledon 1 Badir 16	Tottenham 3 Iversen (7)	Coventry 2 Keane (54)
Watford 1 Smart 57	Arsenal 1 Henry 79	Armsstrong (49) Leonhardson (51)	Chippo (74)
	Chelsea 0		

The home side were out of the blocks like lightning and it was no surprise when Alan Smith made a foray into the box, looked up and threaded a cross to Michael Bridges who hit it first time to put Leeds in front.

Middlesbrough threatened to get back into the game after the break but Colin Cooper's underhit backpass led to the second.

In a 50-50 race with Mark Schwarzer, Darren Huckerby just managed to get the first touch to the ball which sprung off the body of the keeper.

But from 30 yards and at pace, Kewell then sidefooted home with deadly accuracy.

Francis Jeffers' second half strike ended West Ham's unbeaten league record and sent Everton to their highest position for over three years.

The Toffees broke the deadlock after 64 minutes when Nick Barmby embarked on a run from deep that should have been halted.

The ball finally broke away from him in the box and fell to Jeffers, who turned to fire a low shot that Shaka Hislop allowed to spin into the net off his hands.

Hibernian slumped to their third consecutive league defeat, a 3-0 reverse to Kilmarnock at Easter Road with their bright start to the campaign now a dim memory.

The First Division champions went behind to Mark Reilly's individual effort on 12 minutes and then found themselves defied by a collective rearguard

action. With just 10 minutes remaining the inevitable break upfield came and substitute Michael Jeffrey slotted home from close range after an Ally McCoist shot had struck a post.

In the final minute Kilmarnock's win became more emphatic courtesy of McCoist who after being felled by Pat McGinlay in the area converted the resulting spot-kick.

It seemed cruel on Alex McLeish's men but in truth they had been badly short of invention and only a Dirk Lehmann shot against the bar seriously threatened the visitors' goal.

Comeback man Nathan Lowndes created a Tayside derby stir with a late double to earn St Johnstone a 2-1 win and floor home side Dundee.

Saints' near-neighbours appeared all set for the three points following Michael Yates' early strike, the youngster's first for the club.

But Saints plugged away and Lowndes' late strikes provided the glory for the visitors.

In a dramatic final nine minutes when Saints sparked into life, Lowndes equalised with a finish from eight yards.

And no sooner had the St Johnstone celebrations died down than Saints went on the attack again.

Keith O'Halloran created the opportunity and Lowndes rifled home his second with a stunning finish from 12 yards.

CITY BACK ON TOP



Shaun Goater ... put away number five for the season

Manchester City stand on top of the First Division after Shaun Goater secured their fifth win of the season.

The Bermudan international scored from close range 34 minutes into the game at Walsall, who were promoted along with City last season.

The goal was enough for victory, with previous leaders Ipswich losing their unbeaten record to Birmingham.

Trevor Francis' Blues won 1-0 at Portman Road thanks to a 10th-minute penalty from Paul Furlong - awarded for a foul on Stan Lazaridis - and go second above Ipswich.

Portsmouth's French star Jeff Peron sunk Tranmere to the bottom of the table with two goals in the first 20 minutes of their 4-2 win at Prenton Park.

Guy Whittingham piled on the agony for Rovers with a third six minutes before the break and Michalis Vlachos added a fourth in the second half. David Kelly and David Challinor grabbed late consolations for Tranmere.

West Brom, who gave a debut to new signing Andy Townsend, fought out a thrilling 2-2 draw at home to Blackburn.

Albion took the lead with a brilliant goal from Kevin Kilbane but Christian Dailly powered an equalising header after 57 minutes before Egil Ostenstad deflected in Matt Jansen's shot to put Rovers ahead.

Kilbane then secured a point with his sixth of the season.

Fulham left Stan Collymore on the bench, but that did not appear to matter as Paul Peschisolido's strike ensured a 1-0 win over West London rivals QPR, who have not won an away game since last November.

Clyde Wijnhard hit his sixth of the season for Huddersfield against struggling Norwich, as the Terriers also won 1-0. The Dutch striker had missed gilt-edged chance in the first half but made no mistake with a 51st minute volley as Huddersfield took over fourth spot in the table.

Petr Katchouro opened the scoring for Sheffield United after only two minutes but the Blades

eventually went down 2-1 to visitors Charlton.

Andy Hunt put the Addicks back on level terms after half-an-hour and then grabbed the winner with 20 minutes remaining.

There was another 2-2 draw between Bolton and Barnsley, with Ricardo Gardner grabbing an equaliser for Wanderers five minutes from time.

Swindon are just one place off the bottom after going down 2-1 at Crewe.

Midfielder Kevin Street opened the scoring for Crewe, George Ndah equalised after 66 minutes but Shaun Smith's penalty secured all three points nine minutes from time.

Clinton Morrison grabbed his sixth goal of the season to help pull Crystal Palace off the bottom of the table with a 3-0 win over Grimsby.

Morrison's fifth-minute strike was followed by goals from Hayden Mullins and Mathias Svensson.

Stockport defender Shane Nicholson's 15th minute goal was the difference in 1-0 win over visitors Port Vale.

Ahat-trick from Andy Payton Asent Burnley to the top of Division Two after Wigan could only draw at Stoke.

The former Celtic striker scored all the goals as Colchester were soundly beaten 3-0 at Turf Moor.

Previous league leaders Wigan, now down to third, went in front at the Britannia Stadium when Nicky Mohan scored an own goal.

Goals from Neil Harris and Tim Cahill saw Millwall roar back to beat Cambridge 2-1 at The New Den.

Martin Butler had put the Us ahead from the spot.

Managerless Reading squeezed past Chesterfield 1-0 at the Madejski Stadium thanks to Darren Caskey's second-half strike, and Bristol City recovered in fine style after having Paul Mortimer sent off at Scunthorpe.

AUSSIIES ABROAD

Update for W/E 19/9

Mark Bosnich remained on the bench for Manchester United in their 1-1 draw with Wimbledon.

Harry Kewell continued his superlative start to the season with another starring performance in Leeds' game with Middlesbrough. Kewell capped off his game with his first goal of the season and is earning rave reviews every time he steps onto the field.

Mark Schwarzer appeared for Middlesbrough against Kewell and, like his countryman continued his good start to the season with another solid performance.

John Aloisi's injury of the previous week, in which he scored one of Coventry's goal, did not heal in time and he took no part in the weekend's game.

Jason Kearton and Frank Talia both played full games, against each other, as their teams, Crewe Alexander and Swindon Town respectively, battled in a game which ended in a 2-1 victory to Kearton's Crewe team.

Neither Nick Rizzo nor Craig Foster featured in Crystal Palace's win over Grimsby - Foster has not yet returned to the first team squad from injury whilst Rizzo seems to be out of favour at the moment.

'Stan the Man' Lazaridis was just that as he played a full game in Birmingham's 1-0 away victory over Ipswich, earning high praise from his manager Trevor Francis who said: "The goal stemmed from the best player on the field. Stan Lazaridis was always our outlet. If he was not so honest we'd have had another penalty in the second half but he jumped over an outstretched leg. He gets 10 out of 10 for honesty and 10 out of 10 for his performance. He is one of the reasons why we are playing so much better this season."

Both Andy Petterson and recently arrived Mike Panapoulos played full games for Portsmouth as they achieved a 4-0 away thrashing of Tranmere.

Danny Tiatto has secured himself a regular place in high flying Manchester City's side in the last few weeks and he was again on the pitch for the full ninety minutes as City beat Walsall 1-0. Young Danny Allsop, who received praise from his team manager during the week, remained on the bench.

Jason Van Van Blerk is another Aussie having a good run of first team appearances as he again stayed on the field for the full game as West Bromwich

Albion drew at home to Blackburn for whom John Folan had another full game.

Kevin Muscat played the full game while Steve Corica was replaced in the last minute of Wolverhampton's game when they visited Nottingham Forest where they drew 1-1.

Meanwhile, Queens Park Rangers' George Kulscar is making a recovery after his meningitis scare.

Tim Cahill played a full game and scored in the 72nd minute while Olyroo Lucas Neill was substituted in the 50th minute as Millwall beat Cambridge 2-1 in the Nationwide Division Two.

Andrew Bernal completed the whole game in Reading's 1-0 win over Chesterfield.

Craig Moore, Tony Vidmar and Mark Viduka enjoyed well earned rests from the grind of the Scottish Premier League after their teams, Rangers and Celtic, underwent a hectic European and domestic league schedule over the last few weeks.

Stuart Lovell, on the other hand, came on at the start of the second half in Hibernian's unfortunate destruction at the hands of Kilmarnock to the tune of 0-3.

In the Croatian First Division Josip Skoko and Tony Grdic (a former Sydney United junior) both played full games and received a seven out of ten rating for their performance in Hajduk's 3-0 win over Zagreb.

Ante Seric, a regular in the all conquering Croatian Under 21 team, is not having as much opportunity with his club team, Hajduk, where he again failed to make the starting line up for their game against Zagreb.

Ante Milicic is yet to make an appearance for Rijeka after his recent transfer to the Croatian First Division team.

David Zdrilic scored his first goal in the German Bundesliga, a 15th minute effort, and was replaced in the 85th minute as his struggling SSV Ulm finally won its first game after promotion from the second division with a 2-0 win over Arminia Bielefeld to move themselves away from the bottom of the table.

Ned Zelic was not in TSV Munchen's squad for the weekend game against Borussia Dortmund to whom they lost 0-3 at home. With Thomas Haessler occupying Zelic's favourite central midfield role since his arrival at the beginning of the season the Australian star was shifted into a defensive role. However, since he was sent off three weeks ago he has not been able to force his way back into the squad.

Paul Agostino is in the same position and has not been part of the Munchen squad for any games this season.

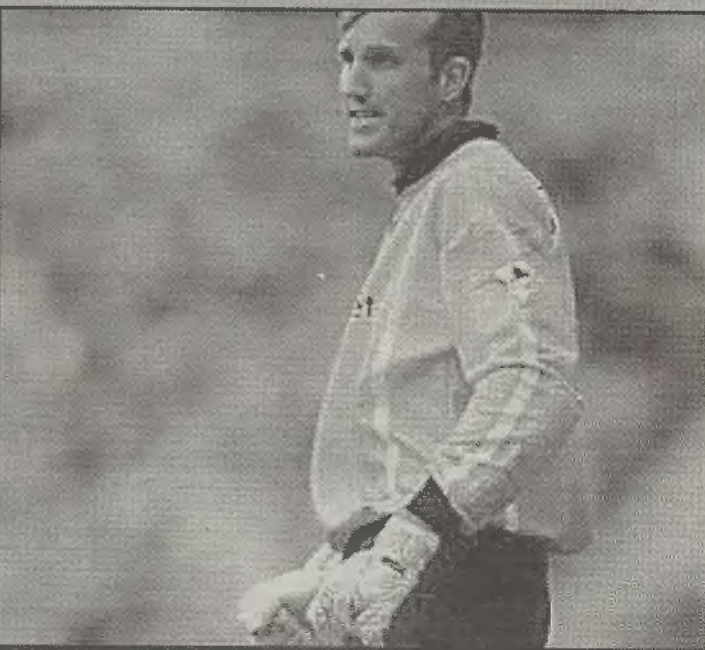
Josip Simunic, the former Melbourne Knights' sweeper has returned from injury and has made an appearance as a substitute for his club Hamburg but did not appear on the field in the team's first defeat of the season at the hands of Kaiserslautern on the weekend.

In the Italian Serie A competition Paul Okon was not included in Fiorentina squad for the game against Verona which they won four goals to one.

Marco Bresciano and Vince Grella's Empoli had not played on the weekend at the time of going to press.

In Holland, Zeljko Kalac played a full game in goals for his team Roda JC in their 0-2 home loss to Heerenveen.

In Belgium, Kresimir Marusic was sent off in his team's, Lommel, 0-1 loss to Mechelen.



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